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THE BOOK**

FROM SERVANT  
TO PATRON

*The Life Story of Isaiah Thomas*

ANNE RUSSELL MARRIE

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FROM 'PRENTICE  
TO PATRON

By ANNIE RUSSELL MARBLE

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FROM PRENTICE TO PATRON:

The Life Story of Isaiah Thomas

BUILDERS AND BOOKS

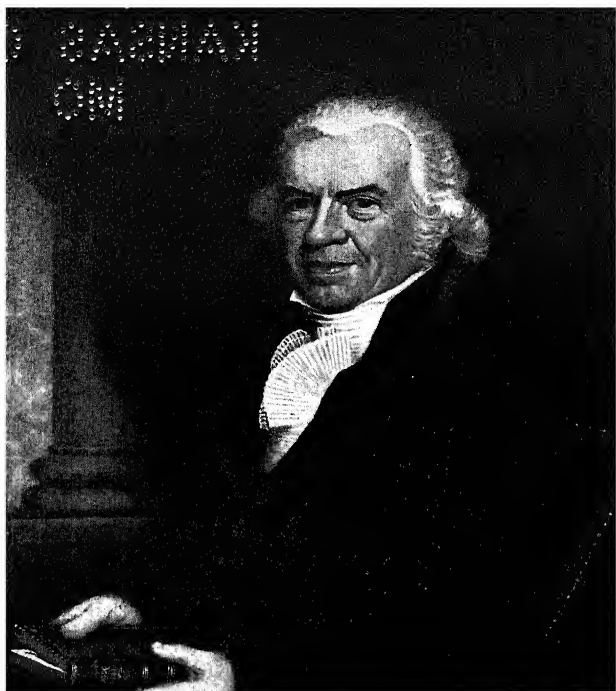
PEN NAMES AND PERSONALITIES

A STUDY OF THE MODERN NOVEL

THE NOBEL PRIZE WINNERS IN  
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THE STORY OF LEATHER-  
STOCKING





ISAIAH THOMAS, FROM A PORTRAIT PAINTED BY ETHAN  
ALLEN GREENWOOD IN 1818, NOW IN POSSESSION OF  
THE AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

# FROM 'PRENTICE TO PATRON

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*The Life Story of Isaiah Thomas*

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BY  
ANNIE RUSSELL MARBLE



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D. APPLETON-CENTURY COMPANY

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NEW YORK

1935

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SOUTHWEST

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Ma 1 '36

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO THE COUNCIL OF THE  
AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY  
(WHICH WAS FOUNDED BY ISAIAH THOMAS)  
THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED  
BY THE AUTHOR





## FOREWORD

**I**N Malvolio's famous classification, "Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them," Isaiah Thomas would take high rank in the second group. He was born into a family without money or social influence; he was apprenticed to a trade at seven years of age and was denied "schooling," and yet, before he was twenty-one, he was recognized as a resourceful, expert thinker and printer and a daring patriot. His workmanship was always his *art*. From the handicaps of poverty and opposition he wrested an ability which grew apace with his inventive mind and unwavering courage.

Benjamin Franklin, John Hancock, and Paul Revere were among the Americans who paid tribute to his mechanical skill and his progressive spirit. Travelers from foreign countries visited him and recorded his achievements and his influence upon American education and letters. He established printing-presses and he capitalized bookstores in distant places in New England, New York, and Maryland. Sometimes the ventures failed financially, but he never complained of any sacrifices for worthy causes. He realized the lack of education in his youth, and he was determined to give to American homes and schools the best possible books at the lowest prices. He gave personal care to the products of his presses; the paper was strong, the text was clear, the bindings were attractive and durable. Readers, spellers, geographies, juveniles, Bibles, "musick books," reprints of English classics in prose and verse—such publica-

tions followed his initial success with the *Massachusetts Spy* and *Thomas's Almanacks*.

If one might use the word *promoter* without risk of commercial meaning, this word would well apply to the achievement of Isaiah Thomas in stimulating the use of worth-while books in American homes. He gave many years of service and large contributions to civic, state, and Masonic organizations. He initiated and developed many projects for public welfare. As patron of letters, he bought a large collection of newspapers, pamphlets, broadsides, tracts, and books in an age when such efforts would call forth from his neighbors more amazement and ridicule than appreciation.

From early manhood he cherished two aspirations which he fulfilled: (1) to write a *History of Printing in America* and (2) to found in America a Society for Antiquarian Research similar to those in foreign countries. As a memorial to his years of struggle and to his legacies of world-wide influence in history and literature this volume has been written. Here are released extracts from his diaries and letters, and from the Thomas Papers, which give factual information about his personal life which has not before been published. His personality was dominating and magnetic. He was an egoist. His influence and name, however, have been identified with many activities of world-wide usefulness for three generations. From colleges and universities, from libraries and learned societies in all parts of this land and abroad, scholars have come to consult the historical and literary source-material at the American Antiquarian Society where "more than a million data" have been added to *his nucleus* and where his ideals and spirit are still regnant.

Worcester, Mass.

ANNIE RUSSELL MARBLE

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**I**N the preparation of this biography of Isaiah Thomas, the publishers and the author would express gratitude, both for incentive and assistance, to the late Dr. Charles L. Nichols of Worcester, Massachusetts. His accumulated and collated materials upon the subject have been of inexpressible value. They form the nucleus of this volume; in the Notes are references to his addresses upon the subject.

For two years the author has given her major interest and time to reading the diaries, letters, and other materials at the American Antiquarian Society referring to Isaiah Thomas and his time. These have been supplemented by research in many places. A need of a biography of this local printer, national educator, and patron of letters has been often expressed by scholars and general readers.

In addition to the constant aid given by the librarians at the American Antiquarian Society, especially Dr. Clarence S. Brigham, Director, Robert W. G. Vail, and Mrs. Mary Reynolds, the author would record appreciation of assistance from the following sources: Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston Athenæum, Widener Library, New York Historical Society, Worcester Historical Society and its former director, Mr. U. Waldo Cutler, also from Frederick W. Hamilton, Grand Secretary of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Masons in Massachusetts, and from other lodges. To Professor Merle Curti of Smith College and to Professor Z. W. Coombs of

Worcester, the author expresses her appreciation for proof-reading and valuable suggestions.

Cordial coöperation in letters has been given by the descendants of Isaiah Thomas—Mrs. Edward M. Beals (Bertha Thomas Beals), Mrs. Livingston Cushing (Ada Thomas Cushing), and Mrs. George Sturgis (Rosamond Thomas Sturgis).

A large debt of gratitude is ours to one who has made possible the publication of this book at this time. She is the wife of a member of the Council of the American Antiquarian Society, whose name is withheld by request; her generous interest in educational affairs and her patriotic efforts are here exemplified.

The author is also grateful to the New York Historical Society for permission to reproduce in facsimile a letter from Isaiah Thomas to Jedediah Morse; and to the American Antiquarian Society for the other illustrations, including the Isaiah Thomas book-plate, engraved by Paul Revere, to be found on the inside cover of the book.

ANNIE RUSSELL MARBLE

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*BOOK I*  
YEARS OF POVERTY AND ADVENTURE  
*1749-1780*



## CHAPTER I

### THE PRINTER'S APPRENTICE

THE Selectmen of Boston, in the 1750's, made occasional recommendations about the education of youth. The masters of the five Schools of Reading, Writing and Grammar were instructed "to provide suitable books at the charge of the Town, to be given to such poor children as they might think proper." They were not to *exact* entrance money of any children belonging to the town but they might *receive* moneys from scholars "to defray the expense of firing." This last word applied to the fuel.

Among the pupils, who aggregated more than seven hundred between 1755 and 1760, there should have been recorded the name of Isaiah Thomas, who was born in Boston on January 19, 1749. His own record, however, was that he "had not more than six weeks' schooling in all, and poor at that." This brief period was not due to physical or mental defects in the boy who, at eighteen years of age, was acknowledged one of the most skilful printers in the province, able to use both forceful words and excellent type. While boys of his age were learning to read, spell, write and "do figures," he was blazing his trail along many other roads of self-education.

Standing on a long stool, eighteen inches high, at the age of six he set his first types in cases, upon the Dutch press, in a little shop in Middle Street, owned by Zechariah Fowle. The chief products of this press consisted of ballads and chap-books that were sold on the street, with a few books in more permanent form. When Isaiah Thomas was an old man, honored throughout the country and in England as one of the most progressive publishers and patrons of literature, he would show to his grandchildren and chance visitors this first sample of his type-setting. It was a dull, vulgar composition, typical of the coarse humor of the times and the prevailing scorn for the legal profession. The title of this ballad, set in double pica type, was "The Lawyer's Pedigree," said to be written by Jonathan Swift.

A six-year-old boy would not understand the meaning of many of the words and salacious innuendoes which he was setting in type. The Selectmen of Boston, however, would have been amazed had they known *who* was printing this wanton and rakish tale of the pedigree from a Beggar and a Beadle to an Emperor, a Pope and a Lawyer. The first half of the ballad, the less audacious portion, here given, is copied from an original in the American Antiquarian Society, with the imprint: "Printed and sold below the Mill-Bridge, 1755; Boston."

A Beggar had a Beadle,  
A Beadle had a Yeoman;  
A Yeoman had a prentice,  
A prentice had a Freeman:

The Freeman had a Master,  
The Master had a Lease;  
The Lease made him a Gentleman,  
And Justice of the peace.  
The Justice being rich,  
And gallant in Desire,  
He marry'd with a Lady,  
And so he had a Squire:  
The Squire had a Knight  
Of courage bold and stout;  
The Knight he had a Lord,  
And so it came about.  
The Lord he had an Earl;  
His country he forsook,  
He travel'd into Spain,  
And there he had a Duke:  
The Duke he had a prince,  
The prince a King of Hope;  
The King he had an Emperor  
The Emperor a Pope.

How came it that Isaiah Thomas, born as he said with truth of "a respectable family," lacked normal home life and was working for a printer when he should have been in school? His is a story of an adventurous boyhood, with some sadness and more unrest and conflict. His great-great grandfather was Evan Thomas of Welsh stock. By tradition he was identified as that "Capt. Thomas who sailed the good ship, William Francis, into Boston Harbor, in 1632" and landed sixty passengers, among whom was Mr. Thomas Weld, the preacher. Eight years later, with his wife,

Jane, and four children born in Wales, Evan Thomas was "receiving twenty bushels of corne at harvest"; he was "considered as a resident" in 1642. (On January 25, 1641, Evan Thomas and Henry Dawson had been "admitted as inhabitants.") Thomas was a vintner with property "on the dock," probably what was known as North Street, near King Arms Tavern. On the town record for March 18, 1647, he was listed as one of "the Sealers of leather"; his associates were "bro. Copp" (William Copp), Wm. Courser and John Stevenson. His name is among the members of the Artillery Company of these years.

Isaiah Thomas may have inherited his fearlessness and his resistance to any ban upon his personal liberty from this first American ancestor. The latter had dealings with that master of financial speculations, Isaac Allerton of Plymouth and later of New Haven, for they traded "for one hogshead and four barrels of mackerel" for which Thomas was to receive half the profits.<sup>1</sup>\* In fine handwriting, with flourishes on the *E* and *T*, Evan Thomas signed a petition, with other Boston merchants, for a reduction of duty on salt, a remonstrance against "the custom or import conceived to be piuiditall to the Commonwealth and also a discoridgmt to merchants." He defied restrictions and fixed prices. On October 17, 1654, with Lieutenant Hudson, he was fined "for selling beere above two pence the quart and also forfeited bond for appearance

\* The footnotes to the text will be found on pages 305 to 312.

at the Court of Assistance to answer the same." By decree, "this Court, upon their pet. thinks meet to remitt their bonds, but se no cause to take off their ffines." Spelling in those early records was erratic, as old letters and diaries testify.

When Evan Thomas died in 1661, he left a wife and six children; two had been born in Boston. His second wife, who survived him, was Alice, widow of Philip Kirkland. She carried on the vintner business "on the dock" until her death in 1697. According to the records, she, widow, bought and sold land (and wharf) in 1671, 1683 and 1693. The next representative of this Thomas family in business was Peter (the grandson of Evan and son of George) who married an efficient woman, Elizabeth Burroughs, daughter of the Reverend Mr. John Burroughs of Salem who had been one of the victims of the witchcraft delusion. Peter Thomas enlarged the mercantile business and made a good impression upon his neighbors as a quiet, law-abiding citizen.

To his fourth son, Moses, father of Isaiah Thomas, came no legacy of his father's repose of mind or his enterprise in business. He was a restless youth and a roving man. Without his father's consent he enlisted, as a lad, as a common soldier in an expedition against Cuba. By personal influence among his friends, his father gained a promotion for Moses to a clerkship for an officer. This position, however, was less appealing to his adventurous spirit. On his return, in accord with

his family wishes, he served for a brief time as a "trader." Again the roving mood came upon him and he sailed on a voyage to the Mediterranean. In vain his father tried to induce him to "settle down to business." He became a schoolmaster for a short period; then he combined farming and shop-keeping on Long Island. These ventures gave him no profits and caused his father anxiety and, finally, resentment. When Moses Thomas died in North Carolina, in 1752, it was found that, by his father's will, his legacy was only five shillings. There seems to have been no later provision made for the wife and five children.

Fidelity Grant, the mother of Isaiah Thomas, belonged to a family of limited resources but dauntless courage. Her early home was in Rhode Island. When her husband died, she was obliged to find means of caring for her family as best she could. She left two of the children, who had been born on Long Island, with relatives there. With her two younger sons, Joshua and Isaiah, and her daughter, Susanna, she went to Boston. She showed traits of industry and practical wisdom in the solution of her affairs. Possibly her husband's family gave her some assistance. The title to some land "on the dock," once owned by Peter Thomas, remained in the family name. It was sold later by Isaiah Thomas, as shown by a registered deed, signed by him and his wife, Mary, June 13, 1780, to Daniel Vose, Esq., paper-maker, to "land and wharf, near Town Dock, owned by Stephen Minot, Esq. and conveyed to Peter Thomas,



Con't or executor, of last will of John Legg, by deed, bearing date of June 26, 1753."

Apprenticeships, or indentures, were customary in the eighteenth century. Fidelity Grant Thomas must have thought it was a fortunate solution of her problem of rearing her youngest son, Isaiah, when Zechariah Fowle offered to take the boy as an apprentice to the printing craft. A copy of this agreement, dated June, 1756, was carefully preserved by Thomas; here are some of the conditions: "The said apprentice, his said master and mistress well and faithfully shall serve; their secrets he shall keep close; their commandments honest and lawful everywhere he shall gladly obey; he shall do no damage to his said master, &c. nor suffer it to be done by others without letting or giving seasonable notice thereof to his said master; he shall not waste the goods of his said master, etc. nor lend them unlawfully to any."

Some of the later conditions would be more applicable to his later years than to those of the six-year-old boy: "At cards, dice or any other unlawful game or games he shall not play; fornication he shall not commit. Matrimony during the said term he shall not contract; taverns, alehouses or places of gaming he shall not haunt or frequent; from the services of said master, &c. by day or by night he shall not absent himself, but in all things and at all times he shall carry and behave himself towards his said master, &c. and all theirs, as a good and faithful apprentice ought to do, to his utmost

ability during all the time or term aforesaid." The termination of these apprenticeships was at twenty-one years, although at fourteen a lad might have the privilege of choosing some other trade, if he insisted upon doing so.

On the part of the "master and mistress" the obligations were less detailed and rigid; Fowle contracted "to teach the boy the art and mystery [sic] of a printer, also to read, write and cypher." He was to be given a weekly lesson in the Catechism. He was to have "sufficient meat and drink, washing and lodging." When the release should come, at the age of twenty-one, as a parting token, he was to be given "two good suits of apparell for all parts of the body, one for the Lord's Day, the other for working days, suitable to his degree."

In the little print shop was one hand press and about six hundred pounds of type in different sizes, with the usual tools of the craft. Here the boy spent long days, setting type and gaining from the two textbooks at hand, a dictionary and a Bible "much stained with use," a vocabulary far above anything which he would be likely to acquire from the schools of that time. He learned to spell and to "point with precision," as the old-time phrase was for knowledge of punctuation. A few years before Thomas was apprenticed, his master had published a school-book, *The Youth's Instructor in the English Tongue*, commonly called the *New England Spelling Book*, which was used for many years. When Isaiah Thomas was eight years old, he did the

# The Lawer's Pedigree,

Tune, *Our Polly is a sad Shit.*

<p><b>A</b> Beggar had a Beadle,          A Beadle had a Yeoman ;          A Yeoman had a prentice,          A prentice had a Freeman :          The Freeman had a Master,          The Master had a Lease ;          The Lease made him a Gentleman,          And Justice of the peace.          The Justice being rich,          And gallant in Desire,          He marry'd with a Lady,          And so he had a Squire :          The Spuire had a Knight          Of Courage bold and stout ;          The Knight he had a Lord,          And so it came about.          The Lord he had an Earl ;          His Country he forfook,          He travel'd into Spain,          And there he had a Duke :          The Duke he had a prince,          The prince a King of Hope          The King he had an Emperor          The Emperor a Pope.          Thus, as the Story says,          The pedigree did run ;          The Pope he had a Friar,          The Friar had a Nun :</p>	<p>The Nun, she was with Child          And so her Credit sunk          The Father was a Friar,          The Issue was a Monk.          The Monk he had a Son,          With whom he did inhabit,          Who when the Father died,          The Son became Lord Abbot :          Lord Abbot had a Maid,          And catch'd her in the Dark,          And something did to her,          And so he had a Clerk.          The Clerk he had a Sexton, —          The Sexton had a Digger ;          The Digger had a Prebend,          The Prebend had a Vicar ;          The Vicar had an Attorney,          The which he took in Snuff ;          The Attorney had a Barrister,          The Barrister a Ruff.          The Ruff did get good Counsel,          Good Counsel get a Fee,          the Fee did get a Motion          That it might Plead be :          the Motion got a Judgment,          And so it came to pass,          A Beggar's Brat, a scolding Knave,          A crafty Lawyer was.</p>
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BOSTON : Printed and Sold below the *Mill-Bridge.* 1755

"THE LAWYER'S PEDIGREE," A BROADSIDE SET IN  
 TYPE BY ISALAH THOMAS AT THE AGE OF SIX



case work for ten thousand copies of the *New England Primer*.

Among the books preserved by him, and given to the American Antiquarian Society, is a miniature volume entitled *Tom Thumb's Play-Book*. On the fly-leaf Thomas wrote the words, "Printed by Isaiah Thomas when he was a 'prentice to A. Barclay, 1762." He meant that he printed this book, as an apprentice to Fowle, who issued the little duodecimo for Andrew Barclay, a Scotch bookseller for many years "at the Bible in Cornhill." The young, keen-witted lad must have been amused at the various operations upon "*A a Apple Py*," from the simple processes of "*B b bit it*" and "*C c Cut it*" to the more complicated "*M m Mourned for it*" and "*Q q Quartered it*." Following these alphabetical lines were Scripture, Catechism and four prayers.

When he was thirteen, according to his memory, and the words upon the fly-leaf, he was both printer and illustrator for another, larger book, *The New Book of Knowledge*, by "Erra Pater, a Jew Doctor in Astronomy and Physica," which contained much information and more tradition about astronomy and astrology. He says, of the woodcuts which he made: "Bad as the cuts are executed, there was not at that time an artist in Boston who could have done them much better. Some time before, and soon after, there *were* better engravers in Boston." Always ingenious and ambitious, as well as imitative, young Thomas

had patterned after the idea, originated by a Negro in the print-shop of the brothers Fleet, who published the *Boston Post* and many broadsides, and he devised some woodcuts for his master that are curios.

It was not "all work and no play" for the boy. He was active and curious, ceaseless both at work and adventure. Perhaps his mother found it impossible to give proper care to his movements and, for that reason, she was glad to pass on this responsibility to his "master and mistress." From three tales of his childhood, which he recounted to his grandchildren, one may imagine his activity and proneness to get into mischief. On one occasion a playmate pushed him into an uncovered cistern and then ran away, without giving the alarm. His rescue was hazardous. A second "narrow escape" was a little later, when he was hanging about the dock where an oyster vender, just arrived on his boat, asked the lad to go to a bake-shop and bring him some buns. The boy ran on the errand and returned to find that the oyster-man's boat had been loosened from the dock and was about to leave the harbor. With typical bravado, young Thomas tried to jump from the wharf to the boat, failed to reach the latter, and was sucked down into the water. By chance, the oyster-man saw a bun floating on the water and, after tense excitement, rescued the exhausted boy and revived him.

The third adventure suggests another source of "play" for this young printer. In Boston, during his

boyhood, there were noisy, exciting celebrations of Gunpowder Plot, November 5th, when the "boys of the North and the South" met near the Market and docks and indulged in scraps which sometimes became riots. On the wagons were always effigies of the devil and the pope, and the contestants in symbolic garb, with lanterns which bore strange devices. From a side alley young Thomas was viewing the pageant and hearing the loud shouts and challenges. Unable to read the letters clearly, he came out too near the wagon. A brick, which was intended to demolish the devil, hit the boy in the head and caused a severe injury. "At the house of his master he was cared for by a surgeon," reads the traditional story. There must have been hours of anxiety for the foster-parents of this lively lad. The Fowles had no children of their own, but they were never accused of any lack of kindness to their young apprentice.

Zechariah Fowle had been a soldier under Captain Thomas Brattle. He was uncertain in health and in temper. Isaiah Thomas used to excuse some of the peculiarities in his master by recalling many attacks of "colic" from which he suffered. He was an "indifferent hand at presswork and much worse at the case."

When any excuse offered he would absent himself from the printing-house.<sup>2</sup> He had a *genuine* attack of colic, and not a sham, when he was unable to respond to "a summons" the year before Isaiah Thomas was indentured.

This occasion was told in a familiar story which the lad often heard in the Charlestown home where he lived with the Fowles. An older brother of Zechariah was Daniel, superior in printing skill and in character. On the street was sold a pamphlet entitled *Monster of Monsters*. This was animated by criticism and satire against the excise act and certain members of the State Assembly. The feigned author was "Thomas Thumb, Esq."; the suspect was the satirist, Royall Tyler. People asked the hawkers who sold it, "*Who printed it?*" They replied, "It fell from the moon." Suspicion came upon the Fowle brothers. Zechariah was unable to answer the summons, because of this attack of colic, but his brother, Daniel, was arrested and imprisoned for a few days. He suffered much discomfort and more indignation. Soon afterwards, Daniel Fowle left Boston and went to Portsmouth where he became a printer. Here he gave temporary employment and assistance to Thomas, as we shall note in the next chapter. Zechariah Fowle, after his brother's departure, moved to Anne Street.

Two older printers gave to young Thomas, the apprentice, some good advice and more practical help, as he gratefully recalled: Gamaliel Rogers and Samuel Draper. The former had been associated with Zechariah Fowle in the late 1750's. An edition of the Psalter and two thousand copies of the New Testament in English, the first in this country, were printed in secret for D. Henchman and other booksellers.



Thomas recalls that his master declared he had "greatly injured his health by hand work at this task." As the Bible, at that time, could only be issued "by a patent from the Crown or *cum privilegio*," the Boston printers might have been prosecuted.<sup>3</sup> The friendship with Samuel Draper, who was a journeyman when Thomas entered as apprentice, was gratefully acknowledged, in spite of a later "newspaper war" between Thomas and another member of the Draper family which will be narrated in a later chapter.

So the years brought education and adventures to the apprentice, in the printing-shop and elsewhere. By 1764 there was a circulating library in Boston of twelve hundred volumes in English, and it is easy to believe that the youth eagerly patronized this source of education. He was becoming restive under his indenture bond and eager to "see more of the world"—perhaps an urge from his parental inheritance. He probably exulted, in 1763, in the opening of a new stage line, Portsmouth Flying Stage Coach, to make weekly trips between Boston and New Hampshire. The stage was kept at Charlestown but "the undertaker" had headquarters at the Sign of the Light-house in the North End. Within a few years Isaiah Thomas would be extending his printing ventures to Newburyport, one of the stations on this stage line, and to Salem.

Although a lad of sixteen, he was vitally interested and active in the political agitations against taxes.

He was a descendant of the anti-tariff remonstrant, Evan Thomas. He knew personally, and admired, some of the Sons of Liberty. One can visualize this ardent, daring youth among the groups, in 1765, who were "singing up and down the streets of Boston, the downfall of Old England and the rise of the New," as a London newspaper described the imaginary scene in May.<sup>4</sup>

Among the books which were printed at the Zechariah Fowle press in 1762, when Isaiah Thomas was setting type in the shop which had moved to Marlborough Street, was one with the title, *A Rich Treasure at an Easy Rate; the Ready Way to True Content*. (This was advertised in the *Boston News Letter and New England Chronicle*, March 3, 1762.) The youth did not imbibe much of this doctrine of "true content." The prospects of advancement in the shop of Fowle seemed slow. He was anxious to become a more expert printer as his hero, Benjamin Franklin, had become. The latter had learned much about the art by going to England and Isaiah Thomas longed to follow this example and have the experience of travel and more expert teaching, across the ocean.

His apprentice bond, however, would hold him for several years unless he could make some escape. In reminiscence, he wrote that when he broke away in 1765, he had had a "sharp disagreement" with Fowle.<sup>5</sup> At that time the least expensive passage for England from Boston, was *via* Halifax; thither he

made his way. A remarkable discovery which tells the tale of this adventure was made in the spring of 1846, when an old building was being remodeled in Portsmouth. Beneath a chamber floor was found some old type and, under a window casement, was unearthed a little book with marbled-paper cover, and this inscription on the fly-leaf: "Isaiah Thomas; His Book, 1766." One of the first entries reads: "Left Mr. Fowle the 19th of September, 1765, and set sail the following day about 10 o'clock for Halifax, and arrived on the 24th day about 10 o'clock which was just four Days from the time I left Boston."

Who gave Isaiah Thomas the money for this voyage? Possibly, he had earned some by personal efforts outside the printing-shop. Possibly, it was furnished by his mother, although she no longer lived in Boston and had formed other family ties. In 1764, she had married Ebenezer Blackman of Westcambridge (one word at that time). A daughter, Mary Ann Blackman, had been added to her responsibilities.

For a few years previous to this marriage, Fidelity Thomas had kept a shop; in other words, she had been what was then called "a she-merchant." Whether this shop was in any way a legacy from the business that had been continued by Alice Thomas, the second wife of Evan Thomas or whether the mother of Isaiah was associated with some other "she-merchant," must be conjecture. Although her name was Fidelity, she was sometimes called Mary; she is so mentioned in one

of Isaiah Thomas's wills, May 11, 1784. Possibly she might have had some relationship to Ann Thomas whose shop was advertised in the *Boston News Letter and New England Chronicle*, in several issues during the spring of 1762. One such advertisement reads:

Just Imported from London,  
In the last Ships, and to be Sold

By Ann Thomas

At the Corner of Union Street, opposite the Blue Ball,  
All Sorts of Peas & Beans, and all Sorts of Garden Seeds,  
Canary and Hemp Seeds; also Split Peas by the Case or smaller  
Quantity.

Cheshire and Gloucester Cheese, Raisins by the Cask, and all  
Sorts of Grocery.

N. B. Stone Ware by the Hogshead or Crate.

It is significant that, by 1765, after the marriage of Mrs. Thomas to Mr. Blackman, the advertisement of this same shop, "at Union Street, opposite the Blue Ball," was signed by a new name of its keeper, Abigail Greenleaf.

Isaiah Thomas often paid tribute to his mother's courage and ability. He stated that she had made sufficient profit from her shop in Boston "to buy an estate in Cambridge." This she sold, as he records, for what seemed a large sum of money, but it was *paper money*, so she lost rather than gained from the transaction. I have found, in the East Cambridge Registry Office, the details of this real estate venture.

Under date of "9th month, 3rd day, 1769"<sup>6</sup> is the

sale by Hannah Fillebrown, a widow grantor, to Fidelity Blackman, "for forty pounds of Lawful Money," land of one acre and a quarter and four square rods, one dwelling-house and barn. Specific boundaries are given. Nine years later, September 16, 1778, Fidelity Blackman, now a widow "grantor," sold to Lemuel Blanchard, Trader, the same property for £275. There seemed to be no changes or extensions of the property in the lengthy specifications.<sup>7</sup>

There are occasional passages in the reminiscences of Isaiah Thomas and his later diaries (kept in his Almanacks) that prove he and his mother were congenial and devoted. Probably he saw her frequently during his Boston apprenticeship and in the years of his struggle against poverty and indifference. To his home, in Worcester, with its many comforts, she came for her later years. In 1804, on the margin of one of his Almanack pages, he sends a message to a "dear young friend," ending with the words: "I can most feelingly condole with you by my recent loss of a very dear, tender, and affectionate mother."

## CHAPTER II

### ECHOES OF THE *HALIFAX GAZETTE*

**H**ALIFAX, to which Isaiah Thomas came at sixteen years, had been established the year of his birth with the Honorable Edward Cornwallis as its first governor. New settlers from Massachusetts and New Hampshire had come to take the places of the Acadians, who had been expelled for political reasons in 1755. They had rebuilt many houses and had tilled the farms, but they were not so skilful at keeping the dykes in repair as the Acadians had been. Many of the New England settlers were of Scotch and Irish races. Some of them came from Londonderry, New-hampshire (then spelled as one word), a place that was to be associated with later events in the life of Isaiah Thomas.

The legislative assembly, presided over by William Nesbit, frowned upon town meetings or town government and criticized the outbursts of independence in the colonies. Isaiah Thomas, large for his age and self-possessed as well as daring, became known as "that young New England printer." His hopes to find a passage to England were dispelled soon after his arrival. He tried to find some work as a journeyman printer. His diary, found in Portsmouth in 1846 (noted in the

first chapter) tells his story in brief: "Went to Mr. Henry's and engaged work with him for 3 dollars per month and he to find me Boarding, Washing, &c. Work extremely scarce."

Anthony Henry, who had been a fifer in the British army, was struggling to make a livelihood by printing a newspaper, the *Halifax Gazette*. It was a dull paper and the young New England printer was destined to give some unexpected surprises to its subscribers—and to the august Assembly. In his *History of Printing*<sup>1</sup> Thomas asserts that Henry was both indolent and unskilful. "As is too often the case [he] left his business to be transacted by boys or journeymen, instead of attending to it himself." He had two apprentices when Isaiah Thomas applied for a job, but he hired the young man from Boston; with typical self-assurance and pride, Thomas finished the narrative of the engagement of himself as printer, with the words, "the sole management of the *Gazette* was immediately left to him." From October 3, 1765, to April 1, 1766, the "young New England printer modelled the *Gazette* according to the best of his judgment and so far as the worn-out printing materials would admit."<sup>2</sup>

A copy of the *Halifax Gazette or Weekly Advertiser*, from February 6 to 13, 1766, is a sample of its contents and form. It had four pages, with "European Intelligence" dated from London, October 19th and considered as "news" in February, and "American Intelligence" from Philadelphia, New York, Boston

and Hartford. There were reports of agitation about the Stamp Act, more opposition than submission, from Albany and Georgia. The Sons of Liberty, at Albany, had broken packages of the stamps and had spilled the contents. On the last page of this issue of the *Halifax Gazette*, the stamp was printed but, beside it, appeared a crude cut of a devil feeding the flames with a pitchfork. Below were the words, "Behold me the scorn and contempt of AMERICA pitching down to Destruction."<sup>3</sup> This sentiment appealed to Isaiah Thomas.

This paper was published in Sackville Street. The price, said the announcement, "will be eighteen shillings a year until the Publisher has an 150 Subscribers, when it will be no more than 12 shillings." A challenging note is added: "Advertisements are taken in, and inserted as Cheap as the STAMP ACT will allow." In November, in this newspaper, were intimations that the Nova Scotians were opposed to the Stamp Act. Henry was accused of "publishing sedition." He told the officers, who served the libel on him, that he had been ill and had not seen a copy of the paper. He was reprimanded and warned not to offend again; thus the first act of the drama, staged by Isaiah Thomas, was finished.

Other articles with similar implications appeared. Upon the report that Henry was ill and that "the young New Englander" was the offender, the latter was summoned to "an inquisition." Isaiah Thomas has dramatized this scene in dialogue, either from notes



taken at the time or from his somewhat biased memories.<sup>4</sup>

Q. How dare you publish in the *Gazette* that the people of Nova Scotia are displeased with the Stamp Act?

A. I thought it was true.

Q. You had no right to think so. If you publish any more of such stuff, you shall be punished. You may go, but remember you are not in New England.

A. I will, sir.

The Secretary of the Province at that time was Mr. Bulkeley. In notes, secured for me, from the Nova Scotia Historical Collections, Volume 5, and from *Early Journalism in Nova Scotia*, by J. J. Stewart, there are other reports of this crisis in the history of Halifax. We may compare the statements written by Thomas with differing accounts. A personal note is made on this "inquisition," as narrated by the author of *History of Printing*, which reads, "There is, however, some doubt as to whether Isaiah Thomas was ever summoned in this manner."

The reprimand, in whatever form it was given, did not deter young Thomas from another bold venture in the newspaper which he was printing. On the day before the Stamp Act was to go into effect, the *Pennsylvania Journal* was issued with heavy black lines around its pages and between the columns. Over the title of the paper was a death's head and cross bones. At the bottom of the page was a coffin with the name

of the journal and the statement that it had died "of a disorder, called Stamp Act."

When these papers from Philadelphia arrived at Halifax, Isaiah Thomas was anxious to use some similar "decorations" of defiance in the *Gazette*. He was restrained either by his master or his own realization of such folly. Not to be restrained too far, however, he reproduced the black borders with this explanation: "We are desired by a number of our readers to give a description of the extraordinary appearance of the *Pennsylvania Journal* of the 30th of October last, 1765. We can in no better way comply with this request than by the exemplification we have given of that journal in this day's *Gazette*." His comment in *History of Printing* was, "This made no trifling bustle in the place."<sup>5</sup>

In the *New England Quarterly*, September, 1933, is an article by Wilfred B. Kerr on "The Stamp Act in Nova Scotia." The subject is carefully studied. There is no mention, however, of the part played by Isaiah Thomas or the *Halifax Gazette*. The author affirms that Nova Scotia was "an outpost of New England" and explains: "On grounds of probability it would have seemed, in 1765, that the majority of Nova Scotians (apart from the official class) would associate themselves in political matters with their relatives and friends of New England proper. The first test of such solidarity appeared at the time of the stamp act." After reviewing the agitations and petitions of New England

legislatures against the act, the author says: "In view of these widespread agitations, we should expect to find among the Nova Scotian New Englanders some demonstrations of a similar nature. But nothing of the sort occurred. They used the stamped paper and there were no riots nor meetings of protest."

An exception to complete submission, however, is mentioned, "a mild attempt to imitate the example of the New England colonies" by having an effigy of the stamp-collector of Halifax hanging on the gallows behind the Citadel Hill, on Sunday, October 13th. On his breast was a confession, beginning:

Behold me hanging on this cursèd tree,  
Example to those who would stamp men be,  
It was for the sake of gain I took this place  
The more the shame, O pity my sad case.

On one pocket of the effigy was "a confession by B—e [Lord Bute]":

America I sought to overthrow  
By stamping them to death, you all must know  
But Pitt o'erthrew my schemes, did me confound  
And brought my favorite stamp act to the ground.

It requires no strain on the imagination to believe that Isaiah Thomas might have had some part in this effigy. His own account of the episode and his subsequent "summons" make an interesting supplement to this article by Mr. Kerr, with its later historical research. Thomas asserts that guards were stationed at the home of the stamp-master to protect him after the hanging

in effigy: "The officers of government had prided themselves on the loyalty of the people of that province in not having shown any opposition to the stamp act. These things were against them, and a facetious officer was heard to repeat to some of his friends, the old English proverb, 'We have not saved our bacon.' " \* 6

On the *Halifax Gazette* the stamps appeared sometimes upside down; on December 12, 1765, only a half sheet was issued with the comment, "news is scarce"—but it was believed that the young printer had torn off the other half with the stamps upon it. His bravado was astounding! A few days after the hanging in effigy, according to his own recollections, he was visited by the sheriff at the printing-shop and warned that he, Thomas, must give some information about the hanging and the persons involved, or go to prison. The narrative continues: "At first the New Englander, by having no person to consult or give him advice, in the honest simplicity of his heart, was about to obey the orders of this terrible alguazil; \* but being suddenly struck with the idea that this proceeding might be merely to alarm him into an acknowledgment of his privity to the transaction in question, he told the sheriff he did not know him and demanded information respecting the authority by which he acted."

In further testimony to his own independence and the weakening of the officer, the printer's memory was called as witness: "The Sheriff answered that he had

\* A Spanish second constable.

sufficient authority; but on being requested to exhibit it, the officer was evidently disconcerted, and showed some symptoms of his not acting under the king's authority. However, he answered that he would show his authority, when it was necessary; and ordered this 'printer of sedition' to go with him." The drama continued to its sequel: "Thomas answered, he would not obey him unless he produced a precept, or proper authority for taking him prisoner. After further parley, the sheriff left him with an assurance that he would soon return; but Thomas saw him no more and he afterwards learned that this was a plan concerted for the purpose of surprising him into a confession." This long extract from the *History of Printing* is a good example of the author's love of long words and his dramatic emphasis on *his* part in any adventuresome situation.

He defied the law again, in later issues of the *Gazette*, declaring all the stamped paper for the newspaper was used and, as no more could be obtained, "it would in future be printed without stamps." For such bold escapades of his journeyman, the publisher, Anthony Henry, was the inevitable sufferer. He realized that Thomas must be "shipped back to New England" but, according to my informant at the Nova Scotia Historical Society, "the Government officials of Nova Scotia were offended and they punished Henry not by fines, but by bringing another printer to Halifax and giving their patronage to him. Publication of the *Gazette* was also transferred to this other printer."

As a contradictory report of what happened to Henry, we read these words, in the account by Thomas: <sup>7</sup>

In 1766, a printer with a new and good apparatus came from London, and opened another printing house in Halifax. He published a newspaper and was employed to print for the government.

Henry, who had been indolent and inattentive to his affairs, did not despond at the establishment of a formidable rival; but, much to his credit, exerted himself and did better work than he had done before. After a few years' trial, his rival, not finding his business so profitable, nor the place so agreeable as he expected, returned to England, and Henry was again the only printer in the province. He procured new types and a workman better skilled than himself. Henry's printing from this period was executed in a more workmanlike manner than formerly; he having employed a good workman in his printing house as a journeyman.

In a later footnote we are told the name of this journeyman, Henry Steiner, who arrived in Halifax with the last detachment of Hessians that came into the Revolutionary War. He was bred to the trade of a printer. When the detachment to which he belonged was about to return home, he was *sold* to Henry for whom he was working, "for the term of eighteen months for thirty-six guineas." While with Henry, he conducted a newspaper in the German language, from German types which he procured from a foundry in Germantown, Pennsylvania. Later Steiner went to Philadelphia.

Less commercial and more entertaining are some other side-lights upon Anthony Henry, recorded by

Isaiah Thomas. He credited him with being ingenious, with "a fund of good humor." Soon after he came to Halifax he married a woman of "African extraction, who was a pastry cook, and possessed a small property, the fruit of her industry." By the money thus acquired, Henry bought a house as well as printing equipment. Within two or three years his wife died. The comment of Thomas is one of typical facetious vein: "Desdemona, in another case of particolored nuptials, wished: 'That Heaven had made her such a man!' Henry's consort had probably a like desire, for it was said the proffer of marriage came from her."<sup>8</sup>

A second venture in matrimony for Henry was with his housekeeper. Perhaps some waggish enemy of the Halifax printer was responsible for the paragraph which appeared in the *Boston Evening Post* in February, 1774: "Married at Halifax, Nova Scotia, Mr. Anthony Henry, aged about 30, to Mrs. Barbary Springhoff, aged about 96; it is said she has two husbands now living, seven children, ten grandchildren, and fifty great-grandchildren."<sup>9</sup> A lack of humor is often noted on the pages and notes of the *History of Printing*, like the comment that this hyperbolic statement "was not correct: Henry was then forty years old, and Barbary not more than fifty-five. She had several children and grandchildren; but not near the number mentioned."<sup>10</sup>

The sojourn in Halifax was over for "the young New Englander." He made careful entries in the little

book that was found in Portsmouth regarding his earnings and time of service: from Henry, he received:

1 Pair of Broadcloth Breeches	0-15-0
Two Pair of Stockings.....	7-0
1 Pair of Shoes.....	8-0
Two Check Shirts.....	16-0
Two Dollars in Cash.....	10-0
To 1 yard of Black Shalloon....	4-0
To 1 yard of Blue ditto.....	<u>3-9</u>
Halifax Currency.....	3-5-9

This account is followed by these details:

Worked with Mr. Henry 5 months, 3 weeks, and 3 days. Sailed from Halifax the 19th of March, 1766, and arrived at Old York, the 27th (at Dark) of said month. Work with Mr. Fowle at Portsmouth 13 days.

Tuesday, April 10, 1766, came to work with Messrs. Furber & Russell for eight dollars per month and my Board.

Received of Messrs. Furber & Russell, 5 yards and a half of Black Serge at 9 shillings, Lawful Money, per yard, 2-9-6.

One phrase which recurs in the writings of Isaiah Thomas, from this age of seventeen until he was his own master, was "worked *with*"—he never "worked *for*" his employers. It exemplified his self-assurance and his respect for his *art* as a printer. Daniel Fowle with whom he worked thirteen days only in Portsmouth, was the older brother of Zechariah Fowle to whom young Thomas was still apprenticed. Daniel Fowle had left Boston, as told in the preceding chapter, after the printing of the pamphlet, *The Monster of Monsters*.



He was printing the *New Hampshire Gazette*, with his nephew, Robert Fowle, as a partner. The latter went to Exeter in later years.

The second firm with which Thomas worked in Portsmouth for a few weeks, on his return from Halifax, included two young men who had been encouraged by Whigs to start a new paper in 1765, the *Portsmouth Mercury and Weekly Advertiser*. Thomas Furber had been an apprentice of Daniel Fowle. Ezekiel Russell was an enterprising and skilful young printer, a Bostonian by birth. When in Portsmouth he combined the "callings" of publisher and auctioneer. The *Portsmouth Mercury* appeared weekly but on uncertain days. Its advertisements were few. It was irregular in size and kind of paper. There was a tone of would-be bravado, mingled with compromise, in the announcement of its purpose: "to print nothing that may have the least tendency to subvert good Order in publick or private Societies, and to steer clear of litigious, ill-natured and trifling Disputes in individuals; yet, neither opposition, arbitrary Power, or publick Injuries may be expected to be screen'd from the knowledge of the People, whose Liberties are dearer to them than their lives."

In spite of expectations that this *Portsmouth Mercury* would exceed in favor the *New Hampshire Gazette*, printed by Daniel Fowle, the latter newspaper became far more influential and long-lived. It was fearless in resisting the Stamp Act. In a black border, it refused

to use the stamps.<sup>11</sup> The *Mercury* lived only three years. Its publishers printed some handbills and broadsides; Furber made attempts at binding books. Russell made fitful efforts to publish a newspaper in Salem (in which Isaiah Thomas became interested later) but his ventures of more success were in Boston where he printed and sold ballads and pamphlets.

The wife of Ezekiel Russell, who was a good friend to young Thomas, received tribute from him, as "an help meet" for her husband and an industrious, active woman who gave him much assistance in the printing-house. Another assistant in the Russell family acquired honorable mention. She "sometimes invoked the muse, and wrote ballads on recent tragical events, which being immediately printed, and set off with wooden cuts of coffins etc. had frequently a considerable run."<sup>12</sup>

Not to England, as he had hoped, but back to Boston came Isaiah Thomas from Halifax, in the spring of 1767. He had tested his ability as a printer and had given ample proof of his courage which in these years of young manhood often seemed foolhardy rather than wise. He was full of unexpended energy and zeal. He had been out to see the world but the only course open to him was a return to Zechariah Fowle and a plea that he might be given employment, with the rank of *journeyman printer*.

## CHAPTER III

### BUSINESS AND ROMANCE IN THE SOUTH

LIFE was tame for the young adventurer on his return to Boston, in July 1767, after the excitements of Halifax and friendly contacts in Portsmouth. The printing-shop of Zechariah Fowle, now in Back Street, produced a very limited output, largely ballads and chap-books. Boston was seething with agitations against the British rulers and measures. Conflicts between the soldiers and the Sons of Liberty were increasing. Isaiah Thomas must have yearned to have some active part, either with fists or types, in hastening the day of independence. He chafed under his apprenticeship bond. He became so restless that he, finally, obtained from Fowle a "discharge," apparently in friendly mood, and so he started for new ventures in the southern states.

His father had died in North Carolina. There were, doubtless, some links there with the past which the son might locate. The record of the departure of this eighteen-year-old youth reads:

Receiving an invitation from the captain of a vessel to go to Wilmington, in North Carolina, where he was assured a printer was wanted, he arranged his affairs with Fowle and again left him, by agreement, and went to Newport. There he waited on Martin Howard, Esq. chief justice of North Carolina, who

was then at that place, and was about departing for Wilmington. To this gentleman he made known his intention of going to North Carolina, and received encouragement from the judge, who gave him assurances of his influence in procuring business for him at Cape Fear; for which place they sailed in the same vessel.<sup>1</sup>

Howard had been hung in effigy at Newport and his house had been destroyed during the Stamp Act agitation. He did not resent this action by the Sons of Liberty, apparently, and was enjoying his rank as chief justice appointed by the Tory government, with a salary of one thousand pounds. The "young, ardent New Englander" must have used more than wonted restraint and tact in his relations with Judge Howard and with Acting-Governor Tryon. He probably did not tell them about his activities against the Stamp Act, when he had been printing the *Halifax Gazette*. The personality of Isaiah Thomas was attractive, according to testimony from many sources. He was tall, robust, with splendid posture, and keen eyes that never missed any object that was in sight. He impressed young and old with his determination and his latent abilities.

At Wilmington one of his contacts, made through an introduction by the captain of the ship, was with "a lady who kept a coffee-house in the town." She seems to have been attracted by the youth and proposed to him a partnership in business. He was to print a newspaper and she was to conduct the coffee-house; the profits of the two concerns were to be equally divided between them.<sup>2</sup>

Acting-Governor Tryon, like Judge Howard, encouraged the youth to settle in Wilmington; he was promised some printing for the government. It is doubtful if either gentleman knew the paucity of Thomas's resources or the difficulty which he would meet to supply himself with press or type. "But something in the young man won confidence and credit." <sup>3</sup> At that time, in Wilmington, there was an unpopular printer named Andrew Steuart. He had so displeased the government and his patrons, that he was in rank disfavor and was about to leave town; he offered for sale his press and three small fonts of letters.

As soon as Steuart learned that a young, ambitious printer, Isaiah Thomas from Massachusetts, wished to buy a press and that he had encouragement and, probably, financial aid from men of influence like the judge and governor, he offered his equipment for a price that was really "three times its value when it was new." He knew that this was the only press for sale in that town; he learned from some of his associates and his creditors in Wilmington that some arrangements had been made by which Thomas could borrow the money on long payment terms. The first price was refused, however, so Steuart reduced it by a third but insisted that the sale price, now offered, must include a Negro woman and child, for he could not take these with him when he left town. There is an element of comedy in this tale of the Wilmington "dickering"; one wonders if Thomas, in his later years of reminiscence, gave dramatic coloring to

the situation. One wonders, also, if the Negro woman, who could be readily sold by Thomas for the price he paid for her, was as well-recommended as was one advertised by Fleet, the printer of Boston, in the *Boston Evening Post*, August 23, 1742: "To be sold by the Printer of this paper, the very best Negro Woman in this town, who has had the small-pox and the measles; is as hearty as a Horse, as brisk as a Bird, and will work like a Beaver."

When the condition of sale, including the Negro woman, owned by Steuart, seemed to be arranged satisfactorily, the printer again made an addition to the articles to be bought at the price, namely, much of his household furniture. Angry and again restless, Thomas refused to sign the contract, although a merchant of Wilmington had offered to send to England for some equipment for him. So he quitted the place—and the landlady of the coffee-house—and set sail for the West Indies in the small barque in which he had arrived. He was inspired anew with the ambition to go to England and he thought he might get passage thither from the West Indies. He agreed to go as steward (in place of passenger as before) for his money was all spent. The captain of the brig made rigorous demands upon him, according to his reminiscences. He was obliged to do work of a chore boy rather than a steward; he was twice sent up the river in a small boat to procure lumber, "with slaves fresh from Africa," as his companions.

With a change in his objective, Thomas decided to

leave the brig and to find passage, if possible, for Charleston, South Carolina. Here he would present a letter to Robert Wells, a printer there, to whom he had been recommended by a gentleman, Mr. Martin, whom he had met in Newport, on his way to Wilmington. There had been a severe storm which had necessitated the shelter at Newport, where Howard had boarded the ship. Thomas left the packet on which he was listed as "steward" at dawn one morning and found a packet to sail for Charleston, in three days, on which he engaged passage. He told the captain of his change of plan and received a release, "given grudgingly."

In those days, however, there were no dining-rooms aboard such packets. Thomas returned to say farewell to the lady of the coffee-house, and she renewed the offer of partnership after he should go to Charleston, procure materials for his print-shop there, and return to Wilmington. As the packet is about to leave for South Carolina, "the lady sends by her maid a present of stores for the voyage. She lived but a few steps from the wharf and he must needs step on shore and thank her for the kindness. As he is conversing with her, he sees the packet under way; and leaving his thanks half paid, he runs to the wharf but the vessel had gone. He hastens to a lower wharf, but it is too late. He meets the captain of the brig, who befriends him in his distress, takes his own boat with two men and after rowing an hour, the weather being calm, overtakes the packet

and puts him on board.”<sup>4</sup> What a scene for a melodrama or a scenario! Apparently, the sojourn in Wilmington gave to the youthful printer some “first lessons” in romance, perhaps at the hands of “a vamp” of the period, which brought about certain more lasting, more tragic experiences within a few months.

The passage to Charleston was slow and the young, would-be printer lacked money for his passage or to pay his share for food on the way. He left his chest as security; this he redeemed after he had secured employment. He found the atmosphere here friendly and, at small wages which were soon increased, he became a journeyman in the shop of Robert Wells, publisher of the *South Carolina and American General Gazette*. Wells had a bookstore, well supplied for the times. Thomas found much pleasure and instruction in these books, as well as kind relations with his Loyalist employer.

The *South Carolina and American General Gazette*—there did not seem a demand at *that* time for “snappy titles”—was first published by Robert Wells in 1758; it was a weekly, supposed to appear on Friday but quite as likely to be issued any other day in the week. Often the newspapers were delayed for arrival of vessels from distant ports, as sources of “intelligence.” The partner of Wells for many years was George Bruce, another Scotchman. They employed as pressmen a number of Negroes, whom they owned as slaves. To bring these employees out of their condition of intoxication, which



was not seldom, they were taken to the town pump, water was poured down their throats—"The water in the city was unfit to drink"—and when they were sickened by this internal deluge they were shut up for an hour or two and then returned, "in normal state," for their work at the presses.<sup>5</sup>

Robert Wells was a "staunch Royalist and a good editor, active in business, and just and punctual in his dealings," was the tribute of Thomas.<sup>6</sup> At the outbreak of the Revolution he went to England and his son, John, who was on the patriot side, carried on the newspaper and the lucrative bookshop. The elder Wells was one of the auctioneers of the town, a business that paid well, especially when he "auctioned off" a large cargo of slaves. Such scenes left a vivid impression on the memory of the New England youth; he recalled afterwards one such occasion when two Negroes, man and woman, were burned at the stake for poisoning their master; another "memorable" day was when the assembly was elected by candle-light with noisy processions and "temporary hospitals for the inebriated."<sup>7</sup>

For two years Isaiah Thomas remained with Wells, learning and experiencing many lessons that affected his later life. One of these important events was his marriage on Christmas Day, 1769, to Mary Dill, the daughter of Joseph Dill of Bermuda. It had a very unhappy sequel, as we shall note in a later chapter. Throughout his life, Isaiah Thomas, who was usually communicative on all subjects with his friends, refused

to talk about his first wife and this period of his domestic life. They were married at Charleston. It is possible, however, that they had met on the voyage which Thomas had made to the West Indies, in his determination to find a passage thither to England. He deplored the demon of unrest which beset his father but he suffered from the same trait.

He was twenty; his bride was a year younger in age but much older in experience. Probably she was attractive physically, then and in her later years in Boston. She lacked restraint and fidelity. In his libel for divorce, which will be quoted in a later chapter, her husband stated: "Soon after his marriage to his astonishment he found that his wife had had a bastard son years before and that she had been prostituted to the purposes of more than one." There is evidence that Mary Dill Thomas was petulant and discontented, anxious to return to Bermuda. She could not adapt herself to life either in Charleston or in Massachusetts. As he recalled the ending of his two years at Charleston, Thomas wrote: "He had nearly completed a contract to go and settle in the West Indies but his health declining, he returned to Boston in 1770, after having visited several of the southern colonies." There is a poignant meaning in that phrase, "his health declining." His marriage, and parenthood which came the next year, transformed Isaiah Thomas from a restless, adventurous youth into an anxious, hard-working man.

Among the Thomas Papers, at the American Anti-

quarian Society, is a first draft of a letter, dated Boston, March 18, 1772. It is addressed to a "Sir," and refers to a possible chance for Thomas of securing a printing partnership in Bermuda. It has been surmised that it was written to the father-in-law of Thomas. A previous letter, which Thomas had sent in reply to one which he had received eighteen months before, had been lost with the vessel and cargo of "one Capt. Cook" of Bermuda. In the letter of 1772, he cites two circumstances which would make him "willing to quit" Boston and go to Bermuda. The first is political and will be noted later; more explicit is this paragraph: "In the second place Mrs. Thomas has a great desire of Living in her native country, for which reasons, upon suitable encouragement, I would be glad to settle there."

Before he returned to Boston from Charleston, the year after his marriage, Thomas made overtures to another printer in Wilmington, as a letter found among the Thomas Papers revealed.<sup>8</sup> The press and types, refused by Thomas when the wily Steuart tried to drive his hard bargain, had been bought by one Adam Boyd, an English printer. Steuart had been drowned in the river near his home in 1769. The enmity against him, increased by accusations of unjust conditions when he published Francis Hopkinson's "Science; A Poem," and a widespread suspicion that he had opened and published certain letters belonging to prominent men in the colony, lingered in memory, although Thomas thinks some of these accusations were not deserved.

Adam Boyd, with his press, began to publish another newspaper, *The Cape-Fear Mercury*. Thomas gives the date of the first issue as October 13, 1769; Ben Lossing gives it as Oct., 1767, but the former is really correct. It was a weekly, "on paper of crown size, with pica and long primer types." In the long imprint, which is quoted by Thomas<sup>9</sup> "the price is 16 s. a year" and the printer offers for sale, in addition to his newspaper, "sundry Pamphlets and Blanks: Also: Epsom and Glauber Salts by the lb. or in larger quantity."

The letter which was written by Thomas to Boyd is not at hand but the reply by Adam Boyd, under date of 8th Dec. 1769, just before the marriage of Thomas, gives interesting sidelights upon the caution of this British printer and the possible reputation which Isaiah Thomas, as a young, erratic man, had left in Wilmington. The rumor that Boyd had need of a printer and had sent to England for one, evidently impelled Thomas to offer himself as a partner. After explanations for the delays in answer to Thomas's letter, Boyd writes:

Times are very critical & at all Times the Director of a printing-office is liable to Censure & when this would happen you would like as little to bear censure from me as I would from you. In Partnerships of any kind People should know each other's disposition and Principles very well, before they form that connection. I do not mean this in any other Light than that we are strangers to each other. I dare say you would dislike me as soon as I would you, tho' I make no doubt of your being properly qualified for the Business. As you was so

obliging to send me a Paper I have sent you some of mine. I know they are very incorrect and contain nothing new.

Perhaps the samples sent by Boyd at this time, and his lack of encouragement, rankled in the memory of Thomas when he wrote: "It has been said that he possessed some classical knowledge, which is not improbable; but his printing was, certainly, that of an unskilful workman. In 1776, he exchanged the press for the pulpit."<sup>10</sup>

Balked in his hopes and tentative plans for either an English voyage or a partnership with some southern printer, Isaiah Thomas came back to Boston with his wife. He was, within a few months, to end his service with Fowle and to become an independent publisher. In spite of financial troubles and marital disaster, he was forecast, at twenty years of age, to become one of the most skilful and influential craftsmen in New England.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE GENESIS OF THE *MASSACHUSETTS SPY*

THE Boston of 1770, to which Isaiah Thomas and his young wife came from the South, was a place of much bitter speech and occasional affrays with the British soldiers that were called "brutal" by the patriots. John Hancock, who had been arrested as a dangerous leader of opposition, was out on bail. James Otis had been seriously injured by a blow upon the head, in the previous September. Later historians have given a version of this mishap to the brilliant Otis which exonerates the British soldiers but, at the time, feeling ran high. Samuel Adams and Thomas Cushing were speaking bold, challenging words against Governor Hutchinson and his Council. Although the Governor was a native of Massachusetts and less distasteful to the patriots than his predecessor, Bernard, had been, yet both were victims of rabid censure by their political foes.

There still rankled bitter memories of the "March 5th battle" between the soldiers and rope-makers, at first, which became a riot. At the Town Meeting the next day (which began in Faneuil Hall and adjourned to the Old South Meeting-House) the people demanded the removal of the soldiers from Boston. A pledge was finally made by Colonel Dalrymple that

the two regiments, that had been in the town of Boston since the preceding October and had been lodged at great expense to the Crown wherever rooms could be secured, should be moved away. The two cannon on King Street, with muzzles pointing toward the Town House, was another cause of violent opposition.

Zechariah Fowle's printing business was not very lucrative. His products varied from a new edition of Watts's Psalms and Hymns to broadsides of coarse wit and buffoonery. Doubtless, he was glad to see again his former apprentice—for the age limit had now been reached—and he listened to the suggestion that they should form a partnership to publish a new newspaper in Boston. This proposition was in keeping with the initiative and dauntless courage of Thomas. There had been several pioneer ventures in publishing newspapers in Massachusetts. About the year 1730, in response to the petition of Daniel Henchman, an enterprising bookseller of Boston, the legislature legalized the erection of a paper mill. For many years, before and after the Revolution, the best paper products, as well as ink, were imported from England.

John Campbell, a Scotchman with a compatriot, began publishing the first newspaper that survived, the *Boston News Letter*. The first copy was dated Monday, April 17, to April 24, 1704. The first issue was printed on a half sheet of pot paper, with a small pica type, folio. Afterwards it was enlarged to a whole sheet. There had been an abortive effort to publish a *news-*

*paper* in Boston, in 1690, but the authorities interposed and called it "a pamphlet."<sup>1</sup>

With pride, the publisher of the *Boston News Letter*, in the issue of December 26, 1720, recalled its existence "near upon Seventeen Years" and said: "It was the first and only intelligence upon the Continent of America, till about a Year past, one was set up in Philadelphia and another here and how well either the one or the other has answered the said Design, and People's great Expectations, is left with every one to Determine." Such words of a piqued journalist are a chronicle of what has been called "the first skirmish between printers of newspapers in this country."<sup>2</sup> Thomas was to take part in another "skirmish" fifty years later.

Campbell, as postmaster of Boston, had been succeeded by William Brooker. The latter began to publish the *Boston Gazette*. James Franklin, the brother of Benjamin, was its printer for seven months until a new postmaster, Philip Musgrave, made other changes in its management. At his own risk James Franklin, in 1721, with his brother, Benjamin, as his youthful apprentice, began to issue another weekly, the *New England Courant*. In January, 1723, the Court decreed supervision of Franklin's publications; for a time Benjamin's name was used as publisher.

Nearly fifty years had passed since these early strictures upon "a free press," but Isaiah Thomas often heard older associates recall these historical circum-



stances in the early days of Boston journalism. He says that after the experience of Daniel Fowle, "deep impressions were then made upon my mind in favor of liberty of the press."<sup>3</sup> "Published by Authority," which indicated the licensing of such papers, had been omitted from the *Boston News Letter* for two years while Campbell was its printer but it was renewed, for two years, when the management passed on to Bartholomew Green who announced his purpose: "The Design of this Paper is not merely to amuse the Reader; much less to Gratify any ill Tempers by Reproach or Redicule, to Promote Contention, or Espouse any Party among us."

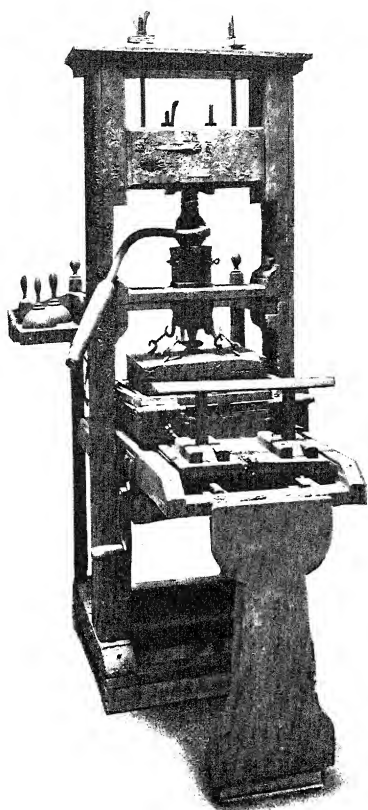
The publisher and the title of this pioneer Boston newspaper had several times been changed: John Draper, son-in-law to Mr. Green, printed the paper for thirty years, and his son, Richard, continued but with an addition to the title; it was now the *Boston News Letter and the New England Chronicle*. A year later it was announced, with the King's arms as decoration, as the *Massachusetts Gazette and Boston Weekly News Letter*. Samuel Draper was now in the firm which received the patronage of the government. In May, 1768, a "combine," evidently with sanction of the "authorities," was made to include the *Boston Post Boy and Advertiser*, printed by Green & Russell, in the weekly plan; the *News Letter* was published on Thursdays and the *Post Boy* on Mondays.<sup>4</sup>

In 1770, there were four newspapers in Boston, and a fifth that was uncertain. The *Boston News Letter*,

now published by the Drapers and favored by the government, was the most formidable rival of the others, the *Boston Evening Post*, begun by T. Fleet in 1735, and carried on by his sons, John and Thomas, and the *Boston Gazette and Country Journal*. This last paper, the third to have the title, the *Boston Gazette*, was printed by Benjamin Edes and John Gill; it became the competitor of Isaiah Thomas's *Massachusetts Spy*, at the outbreak of the Revolution.

There is an amusing criticism by the veteran expert printer, Thomas, of the imprint and woodcut on this *Gazette* by Edes and Gill: "The title had two cuts, which had before been used, the one for the last *Boston Gazette*, the other for the independent *Advertiser*. The province arms, or the Indian, was placed on the left, and Britannia liberating a bird on the right of the title; but the disproportion in the width of the cuts, Britannia being twice the width of the Indian, pressed the title from the centre of the page, and destroyed the uniformity which would have been preserved had the parts been properly arranged."<sup>5</sup>

The wavering newspaper, in the late 1760's was the *Boston Chronicle*. It began December 21, 1767, on Mondays, and was intended to imitate in its appearance the *London Chronicle*: "It was printed on a whole sheet demy, in quarto, on a broad-faced long primer, from an Edinburgh foundry."<sup>6</sup> The printers were Mein & Fleming, on Newbury Street; John Mein was a bookseller and John Fleming was a printer. For a year it



EARLY PRINTING PRESS USED BY ISAIAH THOMAS, NOW  
AT THE AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY



flourished, with "a handsome list of subscribers." Then the publishers became too ambitious. They decided to publish it *twice* a week for the same price, six shillings and eight pence a year. The columns contained some frank criticisms of prominent whigs in Boston, as well as severe comments upon actions of the Crown. Mein was threatened with action because of "insulting the populace," and he left town. Fleming continued the issues until June 25, 1770, when it was discontinued with the comment: "The Printers of the Boston Chronicle return thanks to the Gentlemen who have so long favoured them with their subscriptions, and now inform them that, as the Chronicle in the present state of affairs cannot be carried on, either for their entertainment or the emolument of the Printers, it will be discontinued for some time."<sup>7</sup> In this journal had appeared some satiric essays on education by John Trumbull, later author of *M'Fingal*, who wrote as "The Meddler."

Was it mere effrontery or wisdom to launch a new newspaper immediately upon the failure of this *Boston Chronicle*? Encouraged by some prominent patriots to furnish a paper which would appeal to the minds and pocket-books of "mechanics and other classes of people who had not much time to spare from business," the first issue was sent gratis, to many inhabitants of the town and environs. Perhaps this was a first effort to give literary lure to the "tired business man"; it was more bristling in energy than later models for the same

class. From a copy of this first issue, July 17, 1770, are quoted the "Proposals for Printing by Subscription A New Paper of Intelligence, entitled

### THE MASSACHUSETTS SPY

I. This Paper will be printed with a fair Type, upon good Paper manufactured in the Province.

II. The Publication will be punctually every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

III. The Price to Subscribers at the moderate Rate of Five Shillings, Lawful Money, *per Annum*. One Half to be paid on the Delivery of the Second Number, and the other Half at the expiration of the Year after the Second Publication.

IV. Those Ladies and Gentleman in this Town, who subscribe for this Paper shall receive it every Publication Day at their respective Houses; and the greatest Care will be taken to send it to the most distant Subscribers with all possible Dispatch.

V. It shall be enlarged to double the Size of the first Number as Occasion may require without any additional Expense to Subscribers.

VI. Number II will be published on the 31st instant if a sufficient Number of Subscribers appear by that Time.

Subscriptions are taken in by Zechariah Fowle, Printer, in Back Street; and by Isaiah Thomas, Printer, in School-House Lane, near the Latin School, Where Intelligence, Advertisements &c for this Paper will be thankfully received.

In this announcement of "Proposals" for publishing this sheet, which had two pages only, one reads the hall-marks of the young Isaiah Thomas. It must have been a proud day for him when he saw his name in print as an actual Boston printer and publisher. A tone of assur-

ance of success and a challenge to possible critics pervade all his writing in these earlier years.

The new journal contained "European Intelligence" and "American Intelligence," of varied kinds. "News" from London was dated in May, but such delay was not unusual in those days of slow sailing. Among the bolder items were these: "The late disturbances at Boston" [reference probably to the Boston resistance to tax on tea] "it is said, has opened the eyes of the ministry to see the fatal consequences of a childish obstinacy with respect to the making them subject to the power of British parliament, without an adequate representation and has determined them to take off the remaining tax on tea, before the expiration of the present sessions, contrary to their later resolve." Among events of "American Intelligence":

WILLIAMSBURG, (VIRGINIA) JUNE 21—An association is formed of the Gentlemen, Merchants, Traders and others, in the colony, to prevent the importation of sundry goods manufactured in Great Britain which is to continue in force until the Act of Parliament imposing a duty on paper, glass, painters' colours and tea for the purpose of raising a revenue in America be totally repealed. It will be signed this evening at the capitol, and it must give true pleasure to every lover of freedom in America to find the merchants (disdaining the sordid considerations of interest) joining most cordially in this agreement.

Less tense politically, yet giving a side-light upon the civic troubles and domestic habits of those days, was this item from Philadelphia, July 2nd: "Five or six people

have lost their lives, within a few days past, by imprudently drinking too freely of cold water." There was promise of lists of ships, arriving and departing from prominent ports, mention of births, marriages and deaths, and a request for "Select Pieces of Prose and Verse" and for advertisements from "any who choose to advertise herein."

The second issue did not appear in late July, as first promised, but it did contain four pages on its publication, August 7th. In the first column were Maxims for Patriots, beginning:

To the Publishers of the Massachusetts Spy

At this alarming crisis, when the whole British Empire is convulsed, and seems to be on the brink of ruin, occasioned by a set of wretches who having the sway of government in their hands, would rule the kingdom with a *Rod of Iron*, it becomes every loyal subject to use his influence and endeavours to have such wretches removed from the summit of their Glory, and have those placed in their stead, whose greatest happiness is their King's and Country's Good.

Among samples of the Maxims are these:

1. A Determination to support his present majesty and his family against the pretender and all his adherents; and in one body, to give any publick and solemn test of their attachment to his person and government.

2. To support good, as to oppose bad, government; and to make the fruit and end of the revolution, the only measure of their conduct, either in supporting or opposing the administration. [Note the use of the word *revolution* here.]

. . . . .



12. To promote a federal union amongst northern colonies in America; and to govern them in so gentle a manner as not to provoke them to cast off their allegiance.

13. To give every possible encouragement to the trade of this kingdom and for that purpose to discountenance all kinds of monopolies, and to encourage our manufactories both at home and in our colonies.

In this second number were items of "news" from London, Charleston and other places, a column against slavery, signed Marcus Aurelius, mention of the arrival of George Whitefield, the famous preacher, and notices of marriages and deaths. A significant advertisement was: "Wanted, as an Apprentice to the PRINTING BUSINESS, an honest, sprightly Lad, about fourteen years of age, that can read and write well." The publishers, "Z. Fowle and I. Thomas," announce here their "new Printing Offices in Union Street, near the Market."

Number 3, contained some advertisements, varying from "Choice Lisbon Lemons at the sign of the Basket of Lemons near the New Brick Meeting-House in Middle Street" to "Wanted, A Wet Nurse." Resolutions were quoted against those who continue to import goods from Great Britain with the threat that the names of those who offended in this way would be published in the newspaper for two years. The attitude of this *Massachusetts Spy* became more unquestionably partizan in spite of its motto, "Open to All Parties, Influenced by None."

A favorite form of wit of the day was the parody,

especially upon familiar passages from Shakespeare. None was more often parodied than the soliloquy from *Hamlet*. It thus appeared in the issue from August 11th to 14th:

A PARODY ON SHAKESPEARE

Be taxt, or not be taxt—that is the question,  
 Whether 'tis nobler in our minds to suffer  
 The sleights and cunning of deceitful statesmen  
 Or to petition 'gainst illegal taxes  
 And by opposing, end them?  
 To live, to act, no more and fast asleep  
 To say we and assemblies and the thousand  
 Liberties that Englishmen are heirs to  
 'Tis a determination directly to be crush'd:  
 To live, to act, perchance, to be all Slaves  
 Aye, there's the rub.

The newspaper continued its same form but reduced its numbers to twice a week. In the issue from August 23rd to 25th, before the change in frequency, there was a note, dated *May 21st*, from London: "Congratulations to the King on the happy delivery of our most gracious Queen and on the birth of a Princess." A few books were advertised in this journal from its early issues; in September 11th to September 13th was announced: "This Day was published, Price 8*d*, Lawful Money, A PRESERVATIVE AGAINST THE DOCTRINE OF FATE, Occasioned by reading Mr. Jonathan Edwards against FREE WILL, in a Book entitled 'A careful, strict enquiry, &c.' Proposed to the Consideration of young Students in Divinity. Printed and sold by Z. Fowle and

I. Thomas at the New Printing-Office, in Union Street, near Market."

Three months of this partnership, and the effort to continue the tri-weekly issues proved too heavy a financial strain. Fowle's equipment was not of the best but, such as it was, and with a mortgage to a creditor (who was in the service of the Crown) it was purchased by his daring partner, with exact terms which are carefully preserved among the Thomas Papers. In late October, 1770, the partnership was dissolved, and Isaiah Thomas was printing his own paper. He was probably living here with his family, his wife having been delivered of a still-born child this same year.

Union Street was the center of many kinds of business. Taverns abounded, and Mason's Hall was the scene of frequent gatherings. At the junction of Union Street with Marshall Lane stood the noted mansion of Hopestill Capen, a wealthy merchant. One of Capen's apprentices was Benjamin Thompson, who in his young manhood in 1769 made a reputation for scholarship at Harvard College. He impressed all who met him by his brilliant mind and magnetic personality. He was always a great favorite with women. Later he married a woman of wealth and social standing, many years his senior, in Rumford, New Hampshire. He received the rank of Major in a New Hampshire regiment but he failed to gain his great ambition, a place as an officer in Washington's army. He was suspected of having Tory sympathies; for this "and other reasons" he was denied the

appointment. He went to England from Boston, with the British officers. His later diplomatic service on the Continent and his title of Count Rumford, followed by romantic years in France, make a strange life-story. He was, probably, neighbor to the Thomas family when the *Massachusetts Spy* was creating its first sensation.

During this first year of its life, 1770, there appeared comments other than those upon "the state of the country." From other journals the young printer chose columns which would awaken attention and discussion among subscribers. One such literary curio attacked the vanity and artifices of women.<sup>8</sup> It began with these words: "Pythagoras asks to have inserted the following paragraphs from CYPRIAN's Life; WOMEN who advance themselves in putting on silks and satins, cannot lightly put on Christ. They who colour their locks with red and yellow begin to prognosticate what colour their hair shall be in hell. They who colour their faces otherwise than God hath created them, let them fear, lest when the Redeemer cometh he will not know them." There was a comeback to this anathema, signed, "Answer by Mary Lovetruth to Pythagoras," in the issue, November 5th to 8th.

The tri-weekly lived until December 3 to 7, 1770. The publisher hoped to enlarge its form. He had added a quotation, with paraphrase from Addison's "Cato" to his imprint:

It is not in mortals to *Command Success*,  
But we'll do more—we'll *deserve* it.

Below are Proposals for Continuing and Enlarging the *Massachusetts Spy*.

I. It would be printed on a good Demy paper, four pages, Large Folio, much larger than any news-paper published in this province and equal in size to any in Great Britain. The paper manufactured in this province.

II. It would be published weekly—every Tuesday, “on which day no other newspaper is printed in Boston.”

III. The Price, Six Shillings and Eight Pence, lawful money, per annum, is Cheaper than any newspaper or any periodical publication whatever, in any part of Europe or America.

The enlargement would begin in March, or sooner if sufficient encouragement should be given. A list of places where subscriptions could be taken in Boston and environs, as far as Salem, is given. Then follows a personal appeal:

#### TO THE PUBLIC

The printer begs leave to return his sincere thanks to his present subscribers for their kind reception of his paper and the generous approbation they had been pleased to signify of his endeavors to serve them. . . . He hopes the Public will *Encourage a Young Beginner*, whose utmost efforts shall be to prove himself as great a FRIEND to True LIBERTY as any of his profession in the four quarters of the Globe, and therefore begs their attention to what he has now to offer;

The Free Use of the Press to defend the *Glorious Cause of Liberty*, and to point out to the world, those base and wicked arts of designing men, who fain would set nations together by the ears, and involve whole kingdoms in Slavery! to help as much as possible in maintaining and supporting that LIB-

ERTY for which our Fathers suffered in transferring it to us.

He assures his subscribers of "Intelligence of all kinds" and that he will have a "Variety of Matter." He closes with the plea: "The publisher now takes the liberty of intreating the assistance of the Learned, the Witty, the Curious, and the Candid, of both Sexes, with whom he should be gald [sic] to Cultivate a Correspondence." Doubtless Isaiah Thomas was as bewildered by the correct use of "shall" and "will," and by absurd misprints, as his long line of successors in printing have been.

The motto chosen by him for his book-plate in later years of prosperity, *nec elatus nec dejectus*, must have been applicable in these years of his struggle as publisher of the *Massachusetts Spy*, both in Boston and Worcester. There was little to cause *elation*, yet he refused to be *dejected* even when financial and domestic affairs were darkest for him. The creditor of Fowle demanded money, and Thomas was obliged to borrow on long period loans. He slowly gained the support of subscribers and, in 1775, when he moved his press to Worcester, he claimed that he left in Boston three thousand subscribers.

It was March 7, 1771, before he could issue the enlarged number of his paper, bearing his own imprint. It was on a whole sheet, royal size, folio, with four columns to a page. The name of the paper was in large German text at the top, with the two cuts on either side;

on the left the Goddess of Liberty sitting on a pedestal; on the lower part of the pedestal was the word, *Spy*, on a scroll on which rested the arm of Liberty; on the right were two chubby infants taking flowers from a basket, with the motto below, *They Cull the Choicest*.

With characteristic bravado he printed a black border on this issue of Tuesday, March 7th, with "Tuesday, March 5th," and a skull and bones at the top of the first column and the words below:

As a solemn and perpetual memorial Of the Tyranny of the British Administration of Government in the years 1768, 1769, and 1770.

Of the fatal and destructive Consequences of quartering Armies, in Time of Peace, in populous Cities.

Of the ridiculous Policy and infamous Absurdity of supporting *Civil Government* by a *Military Force*.

Detestable Principles of Ministers and Conduct of Civil Governors, Be it *forever Remembered*

That this day, the *Fifth of March*, is the *Anniversary of Preston's Massacre*, in King Street, Boston, New England 1770, in which Five of his Majesty's subjects were slain and Six wounded, by the Discharge of a Number of Muskets from a Party of Soldiers under the Command of Capt. Thomas Preston.

GOD Save the PEOPLE!

Salem, March 5, 1771.

That was a bold challenging note, on the first column of a newspaper that asserted its neutrality. The truth was told in a letter which he wrote to a possible publisher in Bermuda, March 18, 1772, already cited in the previous chapter.<sup>9</sup>

In the first place, one of my profession here must be either of one party or the other (he cannot please both) he must therefore incur the censure and displeasure of the opposite party which, to incur the censure and displeasure of any party or persons, though caressed and encouraged by others, is disagreeable to me.

It was a daring venture to start a new newspaper in Boston at this time—or elsewhere—because of unsettled economic & financial conditions & scarcity of paper to be secured in this country.

His seasoned reminiscences<sup>10</sup> summarize the truth regarding his alliances and distinctly partizan attitude:

A number of gentlemen supplied this paper with political essays, which for the time were more particularly calculated for that class of citizens who had composed the great majority of the readers. For a few weeks some communications were furnished by those who were in favor of the royal prerogative, but they were exceeded by the writers on the other side; and the authors and subscribers among the tories denounced and quitted the *Spy*. The publisher then devoted it to the cause of his country, supported by the whigs, under whose banners he had enlisted.

Not all the contributions in this first number of the paper, March 7th, were political in tone.<sup>11</sup> There were "*Reflections on the Vanity of Riches, Honour, and Sensual Pleasures compared with Piety and Virtue*" signed "Z." There was "An Epistle from a Society of Young Ladies," unsigned, beginning, "What charms has the dull, stupid sauntering life of a Batchelor above that of a married man?" This was answered by "A Bachelor" (correctly spelled) in the next issue. One



suspects that many of the contributions, both political and entertaining, unsigned and with allegorical names, were written by the printer; some were copied from newspapers in other colonies.

Notices that subscriptions would be taken in Charlestown, Salem, Newburyport and Bridgewater indicate the widening associations, in business ways, of the young publisher. He needed many new subscribers to supplement his "200" secured by March. One column was devoted to Acrostics, a favorite device in the literature of the times; another was "Poets' Corner." Advertisements began to appear as the spring advanced; some had droll illustrations, like that which announced the stock-in-trade of "William Williams; Instrument-Maker, At his Shop on King Street," who offers for sale "A large assortment of Hadleys and Davis' Quadrants, hanging and standing Compasses" and all kinds of surveying instruments.

Zechariah Fowle's book-store, on Back Street, advertised, in the paper of his former partner, such volumes as *The Death of Abel*; *The Captivity of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*; *Whole Duty of Woman*; *Advantages and Disadvantages of the Married State*; *Look Ere You Leap or History of Lewd Women*; *Pleasant Art of Money Catching*; *Bridle for Sinners and a Spur for Saints*. Here is a varied list and indication of the "reading tastes" of Bostonians in the early 1770's. One of the books published by Fowle at this time was given special notice; "*Mother Midnight's Comical Pocket Book*, or

a Bone for the Critics: Being a sure and certain Cure for the Hip; Containing the nicest and largest Dish of Novelties that ever was Seen—Heard—Smelt or Tasted; carefully Cooked up by Mother Midnight's merry Grandson, containing nothing but Originals; all very humorous, prodigious, satirical and quite uncommon." Books, advertised in the *Boston Weekly News Letter*, of the same period, sold by John Boyle, are of finer flavor, including the *Spectator Papers*, *Young's Night Thoughts*, poems by Goldsmith, Pope, and the novel *Tom Jones*.

As the weeks passed the *Massachusetts Spy* contained more fearless challenges to Governor Hutchinson and his Council, more remonstrances to the King against "tyranny." These were usually written under assumed, classical names, like Mucius Scaevola, Rusticus, Philo Patriae, etc. Some of these led to attacks upon Thomas and his paper, to be noted in the next chapter. There were satiric comments upon the printer, as "Jack-of-all-trades," and hints that his printing-press was becoming what it was later called, "A Foundry of Sedition." The paper was printed in excellent type, which has endured the test of years. The scope of his influence as patriot-printer was expressed in his own reminiscences of the times:

"Common sense in common language is necessary to influence one class of citizens, as much as learning and elegance of compositions are to produce an effect upon another. The cause of America was just, and it was only

necessary to state this cause in a clear and impressive manner, to unite the American people in its support.”<sup>12</sup>

While Thomas was venturing to print this newspaper, he was planning, also, a magazine which appeared four years later as *The Royal American Magazine; or Universal Repository of Instruction and Amusement*. He did not publish these numbers of the magazine until January to June, 1774; but he notes: “A prospectus of the work appeared many years before the magazine but the disordered state of public affairs and the difficulties which individuals experienced from them, prevented it from being sooner put into press.”<sup>13</sup> In the issues which he published appeared not alone such patriotic material as John Hancock’s address commemorating the Boston Massacre and the Reverend Mr. John Lathrop’s “Artillery Election Sermon” but also some Amusement for readers, like “Advice to the Lovelorn” and “Directory of Love.”

## CHAPTER V

### THE HARVARD THESES AND THE "NEWS-PAPER WAR"

THE researcher for examples of "learning and elegance of composition," to recall the words just quoted from Thomas, will find examples in issues of the *Boston Weekly News Letter*. This was the organ favored by the government and the "learned overseers" at Harvard College. It became the rival of the *Massachusetts Spy* in 1771. The names of its publishers, Bartholomew Green and John Draper of the past, and Richard Draper and Samuel Draper, in the 1770's, indicated the educational and social rank of this journal.

In the copy for April 4, 1771 (its full name was now the *Massachusetts Gazette and Boston Weekly News Letter*) is a narrative, written in "elegant" and obsequious language, of the visit of Governor Hutchinson and other celebrities to Harvard College the previous week. Details of the program included the processions and "a handsome Gratulatory Oration in Latin pronounced by Mr. Wetmore, one of the Resident Graduates." To this "His Excellency made an elegant Reply in the same language, testifying his affection to the Seminary in which he had his education and his Regard to the Interests of Literature." After an Anthem had

been sung, "genteel Entertainment was provided for the Governor, the Honorable and Reverend Overseers, the Honorable House of Representatives and the other Gentlemen. The whole was conducted with the greatest Decorum and Elegance."

Into this quiet atmosphere of "Decorum and Elegance," and the newspaper office where its affairs and those of the government were duly described, Isaiah Thomas threw a bomb in the spring and summer of 1771. The Harvard Theses, in Latin, on a single large sheet, had been printed by the Drapers for so many years that no one questioned their right to such a monopoly. By some method which was never divulged fully, or some influence which was intimated in the later "newspaper war," it seems there were "bids" allowed and Thomas underbid his rival probably by five pounds. (The price he received was £95.) A detailed account of this affair, written by William C. Lane, was published in the *Transactions of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, in 1924.

With well-controlled resentment the printer of the *Boston News Letter* made a statement in the issue for July 11, 1771: "We hear there are 62 young Gentlemen to commence Bachelors of Arts next week at Harvard College; It is said they have thought proper to take the Employ of printing the THESES from this Office, which has served every Class since their first being printed, and bestowed their Favor on the printer of the News Paper called the Massachusetts Spy." Note

the tone of patronage and superiority! With satisfaction Mr. Draper adds: "The Gentlemen who are to commence Masters of Arts we hear have agreed that their QUESTIONS should be printed as customary."

The Questions for 1772 and 1773 were printed by the Drapers but they never afterwards published the Theses. Isaiah Thomas secured Fleet as his associate for the printing of 1772 and 1773; there were none printed in 1775 and 1776. When the Theses were resumed, they were given to Fleet alone or to Thomas and Fleet (more often) until 1784. In 1789, I. Thomas & Co. made an innovation and added a grand ornamental border.

A comparison of the sheet of Theses for 1770 with that for 1771 reveals that the latter had a larger and finer type and an excellent paper. With pride the young printer must have placed his insignia, at the bottom of the long sheet: *Bostoniae in Papyrus Miltoni in Nov-Anglia confectam. Typis Isaiae Thomas.* The apprentice lad who had "not more than six weeks of schooling and poor at that," at the age of twenty-two, was printing, all in Latin, four Theses in Technology, nine in Metaphysics, Six in Ethics, nine in Theology, seventeen in Logic, fifteen each in Grammar and Rhetoric, thirty-nine in Mathematics and thirty-seven in Physics. That he had "learned" assistants who knew the classics and the branches of study represented by these analyses is unquestioned, but Isaiah Thomas was responsible for every word and it is certain that, had errors in text or

typesetting occurred, the bold, young printer would not have escaped reminders of such misprints in the long series of censorious articles which followed this surprising venture. The contract was given him by a Committee of Ten.<sup>1</sup>

In broadside form and in the best Latin, with the name of the Honorable D. Samuel Locke as President, at the top, the citation followed which gave authority to *Thomae Hutchinson, Armigero, Provincia Massachusettsensis Gubernatori* and *Andrae Oliver, Armigero, Vice-Gubernatori*, to confer these degrees in *Collegio Harvardino*, after the presentation of the Theses.

Among the sixty-two names of this Class of 1771 are some that won later honors in statesmanship, science and classical knowledge: James Bowdoin, Andrew Bradford, William Cheever, Joseph Emerson, Perez Morton, Samuel Phillips, Winthrop Sargent, Zedekiah Sawyer, John Warren, Ebenezer Putnam, Daniel Tyler were among the number.

"The war was on!" From July through August it waged over the matter of the printing of the Theses, and the question of responsibility for the change of imprint. Then political accusations were mingled with those of undue influence (or "wire-pulling" in modern phrase) for Thomas. The issues of the *Boston Weekly News Letter* and the *Massachusetts Spy* furnish spicy reading. One's sympathies may be divided between appreciation of the business acumen and initiative of the daring Thomas, and sympathy for the aristocratic

Draper, who was suffering from a pioneer invasion of the commercial spirit into literature. From the many articles pro and con in these two newspapers a few samples are selected.

The *Massachusetts Gazette and Boston Weekly News Letter*, July 18th, had "Verses... wrote Extempore, by a young Gentleman, on reading a Paragraph in your last *Gazette* which is at your service to insert at Pleasure." These lines, addressed to Mr. Draper, were "From a Constant Reader and Admirer of YOUR Weekly Productions."

TO THE YOUNG GENTLEMEN

Candidates for their first Degrees at Cambridge

And is it true, ye Sons of Fame,  
Are Draper's Types thrown by?  
Reproach, Dishonor, Scandal, Shame,  
Attend the dirty *Spy*!

How can ye patronize a Press  
The Engine of all Ill,  
The God of Discord who caress  
The World with Slander fill?

Mark how the frowning Brow reproves  
This Deed of Harvard's Sons!  
*Faction* first vulgar Spirits moves,  
Then round the World it runs.

But ah, alas! that learnèd Youth,  
Should ever catch the Flame,  
Disgraces *Learning*, Virtue, Truth,  
And crops their rising Flame!



One of the first measures of retaliation against Thomas and his paper was the denial to him (by the Custom House officials) of the "Shipping List." It was believed, by the publisher of the *Massachusetts Spy* and his friends, that this severe punishment was due in part to the resentment of Richard Draper, as much as to the anger of Governor Hutchinson and his associates against the defiant patriot-printer. This aspect of the affair enters into "the newspaper war." In the *Spy*, Thomas answers the charge, made by Draper, that the day of publishing the *Spy* had been changed from Tuesday to Thursday to conflict with that of the *News Letter*. The opening words are bombastic: "If thine enemy hunger, *feed* him. If thine (supposed) enemy hunger STARVE him, is the pontifical language of a man in power, of whose piety and virtue we have lately had such blustering account." He denounces the Custom House officers as "parts of a Polypus, petty lords."

Interwoven with the political innuendoes were attacks upon certain members of the Class of 1771 who were openly opposed to the Governor's policies and who, then and later, were writers for the *Spy* under classical pseudonyms. In general Draper wrote, the "Class did not consult their own honor in this particular . . . much less did they pay attention to the inclinations of his Excellency." The *Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, published by Benjamin Edes and John Gill, which was to conflict later somewhat with the success of the *Spy*, was favorable to the members of the Class and their

right to choose their own printer.<sup>2</sup> In answer to both the *Gazette* and *Spy*, a long article was printed in the *News Letter*<sup>3</sup> which contained some personal allusions that help in explaining this tangle over the Theses and the political side issues interwoven:

"All that I request," wrote Mr. Draper, "of the Spymongers, is, that when they characterize, they would not take their Draft from either the Squire from Abbing-ton, the Doctor from ——— or their man, Thomas, and palm it upon their Readers for truth." Explanation of these personal references has not been difficult: Joseph Greenleaf, the "Squire from Abbing-ton," was a dauntless critic of Governor Hutchinson. He wrote for the *Spy* under the name of "Mucius Scaevola." The "Doctor" was Thomas Young. It had been rumored that he had "attended" one of the Draper family and that a "bitter feud" existed between him and Draper. (Other articles which continued this controversy may be found in the *News Letter*, August 8th, and 15th, in the *Boston Gazette*, August 19th, the *Spy*, August 22nd; the last is a defense by a class member.) The feeling became tense and bitter.

In some of his replies, Draper began with the word, "Recollecting this morning that in last week's *Spy*, the Publishers attempted to slur my Character, and misrepresent Facts, I imagined the Public would indulge me in a few words to vindicate myself, notwithstanding I signified sometime since, no notice would be taken of their Scurrility." <sup>4</sup> If this publisher thought he had said

"the last word" he was soon deceived by a rejoinder from Thomas:<sup>5</sup>

TO MR. RICHARD DRAPER,  
RECOLLECTING SIR:

If your customers are satisfied to maintain a weekly newspaper sacred to the exhibitions of your envy and private resentment, I have nothing to say in the affair. But though I might perfectly equal in *random* invective, I have not the ambition to conceit my performance would add anything considerable to the entertainment of my generous encouragers; whom I wish to divert in a much more agreeable manner, than by anything which can arise from the interesting squabbles of Mr. R. Draper and

I. THOMAS.

The arrows of invective had been poisoned in many cases. It would seem likely that, at the beginning of his venture with the *Spy*, Isaiah Thomas hoped for friendly relations with Richard Draper. The kin of the latter, and once his partner, Samuel Draper, had been one of the first and most loyal friends of the young apprentice, Isaiah Thomas. When Richard Draper insinuated that Thomas changed the day of his paper's publication from Tuesday to Thursday, "to injure the *News Letter*," his rival recalled to him that the matter had been discussed and that Draper had expressed preference for Thursday as the *Spy* date. Said Thomas: "This I declare to be false [his desire to injure Draper] and am happy in having many gentlemen to witness for me, that you declared you had much rather I would publish on Thursday than on the day at first proposed;

and no one can believe you would chuse anything that tended to your disadvantage."

Perhaps that tang had been called forth by some of the phrases used by friends of Draper, in his newspaper, to compare the "superior judgment" of *his* publishing-house with that of the "dunghill-bred Journeyman Typographer, Thomas" who has "nauseated the public Palate with such execrable Trash as is constantly leaking from their Sink of Ribaldry." <sup>6</sup>

More vital matters than this after-war, following the printing of the Theses, was demanding the attention—and courage—of Isaiah Thomas. As has been stated, the political conflicts were closely linked with this personal enmity and jealousy. Both Dr. Thomas Young and Joseph Greenleaf were contributors to the *Spy*. The former had warned "against The amazing progress of the Braintree circumferator" and "bold pretender to the cure of diseases." <sup>7</sup> Perhaps it was under the disguise of "Q. Curtius" that the same critic of the government had asked "*Why*, in Mr. Draper's paper only 467 votes for S. Adams as register of deeds" were recorded against "1123 votes for E. Goldwait?" Thus early was there complaint, or at least question, of "unseemly methods of *sorting* and *counting* votes" in a Massachusetts town.

The contributions by Joseph Greenleaf, signed Mucius Scaevola, were provocative of more fierce words against him and his printer friend. The climax was an attempt at legal action. In late October, 1771, this columnist

spoke, with mild remonstrance, against "traitors and perjury," because of the records of some actions by Lieutenant Governor Oliver. In the *Spy* for November 14th, there were more specific charges against "the exceptional clause" in the proclamation by Governor Hutchinson which "seemed to classify the people as *slaves*. He emphasized the inconsistency of the Governor's words in urging them to give thanks for their liberty, saying: "We have need of the wisdom of serpents who are concerned with such rulers; to be considered by them as fools is irritating, for fools they must think us if they can imagine that we can complain of loss of liberty in one breath and with the next solemnly thank God for the preservation of it."

The Governor had suggested that he was "paid by the Crown, not by the Province." The answer to this argument came from "Mucius Scaevola": "If the pretended Governor or Lieutenant Governor, by being independent of us for their support, are rendered incapable of compleating acts of government, it is time, I say, that we had a lawful one to preside, or that the pretended Governors were dismissed and Punished as *Usurpers*, and that the Council, according to Charter, should take upon themselves the government of this province." He urged that "this matter should be inquired into."

In a communication from this same critic a little later,<sup>8</sup> is a confirmation of the narrative given by Isaiah Thomas of the "summons" by the Governor's Council

because of these articles which attacked "Governor or pretended Governors as Usurpers." Mr. Greenleaf is less belligerent when he says here: "I never heard that it was unlawful *barely to ask* and to desire the assistance of our fellow citizens in *this important enquiry*." As was his custom, Isaiah Thomas has dramatized the scenes.<sup>9</sup> Perchance the reminiscence was flavored with imaginative dialogue. Did he really have the effrontery to tell the messenger who summoned him to report at once (as printer of seditious words) to the Governor and to his Council "that he was busily employed in his office, and could not wait upon his excellency and their honours?"<sup>10</sup> In a footnote he assures readers that "this conversation with the messenger is taken from a memorandum made at the time." Judging from the many such "memoranda" which have been found, in addition to many more that have been lost—for there are references to them—one is certain that Isaiah Thomas, from his youth to old age, was a most careful preserver of records of important events in his life and those of current history.

That he did not refuse to answer the summons on his own judgment but on that of "a distinguished law character," is attested; unless "the sheriff should serve such a process upon him," he need not submit. This adviser, undoubtedly, was the able but disabled James Otis, the fearless, brilliant "fire-brand" of the early revolts against the government, who had suffered an injury to his head from a blow during an affray two years before

this trouble between Thomas and the authorities. A scene for a dramatist is offered by the recital given by the printer in Appendix G<sup>11</sup> of the visit of Otis to the *sanctum sanctorum* on Union Street, the upper room which the Tories called "The Sedition Foundry." Here he examined carefully every line of the articles which had appeared in the *Spy*, assuring the printer that there was "no treason" expressed and ending with the pathetic boast, "James Otis still retains some knowledge of law."

Sharing with Isaiah Thomas in the odium of the authorities (of the Governor and the Attorney General) for the articles in the *Spy*, was their author, "Mucius Scaevola," or Joseph Greenleaf. He was summoned to appear and refused—probably on the advice of Thomas—and he lost his place as a justice of the peace for Plymouth county. It will be recalled that he was "the Squire from Abbingdon" who was accused of influencing the Class of 1771 to give the printing of their Theses to Thomas rather than to Draper. No self-respecting Governor (and Hutchinson was such and is generally accredited by modern historians with both justice and courtesy) could afford to ignore the attacks made upon him and his associates by "Mucius Scaevola" when other newspapers were making loud outcries for and against the comments in the *Spy*. The *Boston Evening Post* regarded the article, which appeared on November 14th, as sure to bring prosecution, saying: "It is said the piece referred to above is the most daring production ever published in America." The *Boston*

*Gazette* which often favored the patriot cause, was satiric in reporting the refusal of the printer to answer the summons and the "abundant levity" of such a futile session of the Court. The last words were: "The final result was their *unanimous* advice to the Governor to order the King's attorney to prosecute the Printer at Common Law."

According to the memory of Thomas, this action for "publishing an obnoxious libel" became an event of local excitement: "The Court House was crowded from day to day to learn the issue. The Grand Jury returned their bill, *ignoramus*." I am told by an eminent judge that this phrase "is still recognized but not used today." In answer to my inquiries of the Clerk of the Supreme Judicial Court, Boston—this Court succeeded the Supreme Court of Judicature—there is no mention in any records of that time, from 1771 to 1775, of the name of Isaiah Thomas or any action against him.

The printer, however, left a detailed account of what happened: "Foiled by the grand jury in this mode of prosecution, the attorney general was directed to adopt a different process; and to file an information against Thomas. This direction of the court was soon known to the writers of the opposition who attacked it with so much warmth and animation, and offered such cogent arguments to prove that it infringed the rights and liberties of the subject, that the court thought proper to drop the measure."<sup>12</sup> A bold address to the King, signed "Akolax," on September 10, 1772, aroused indig-



nation of the Tories. Then Thomas reprinted an address to the King from a Middlesex Journal, in England, which was not resented *there* and he asked, "Why should there be such resentment in the colonies?" There was logic and satire in his columns.

Since both indictment and information against Thomas had failed in the Suffolk County Court, it was suggested that action might be taken against him and his newspaper in Essex County where it was circulated and sent to many subscribers. This was never pressed to action. Questions about the validity of the Charters were discussed in this country and in Parliament. One of the frequent contributors to the *Spy* signed himself "The Centinel." For many months his writings were on the front page of the paper, often filling three columns. They seem dull to the reader of to-day, far less pungent than the "essays" of "Mucius Scaevola," or Greenleaf. Other occasional writers were "An American" and "Massachusensis." In the issue of November 22, 1771, "The Centinel" becomes more vigorous than usual, asking questions about the Charter, "its validity and Eternal Unalterable Rule of a Free Government," with a warning cry at the end, "On These Things, O House of Israel, Ye Must Judge." Governor Hutchinson, when he read such words, must have felt inclined to echo the words of Lord Germain, after the Tea Riot: "Some gentlemen say, 'Oh, don't break their charter; don't take away their rights granted them by the predecessors of the Crown.' Whoever wishes to pre-

serve such charters, I wish him no worse than to govern such subjects."

When Joseph Greenleaf, writer of "Mucius Scaevola" articles, was dismissed from the office of Justice of the Peace, because he refused to answer a summons, the records says, "He was generally reputed to be concerned with Isaiah Thomas, in printing and publishing a News-Paper, called the *Massachusetts Spy*." Among the Thomas papers, at the American Antiquarian Society, is a letter—or the first draft of a letter—evidently written to Greenleaf but addressed to an unidentified "Sir." Dr. Young who is mentioned was Dr. Thomas Young whose association with the Harvard Theses has been noted. One son of Greenleaf was later apprentice of Isaiah Thomas. The letter was dated Boston, March 20, 1772:

It is true that on Monday last I mentioned to Dr. Young that I thought it would not be advantageous for us to continue longer together and I alone in the office. If anything in my conduct towards you has been disagreeable within a month past I am sorry for it, fain would I please *all* if possible, but I cannot wear sunshine in my looks unless my heart responds to it. I would willingly believe you have uniformly endeavoured to serve the *joint interest*, that you have treated me "as well as you know how,"—that if I am tired of the connection you would be glad to know it from me—that if "I am as well pleased with it as you are, it will not be for my interest to be together any longer" and "the sooner we separate the better." I hope, Sir, the Spring will present the Business to you that will be more profitable and more agreeable and in which from my Soul I wish you success, tho all that you request of me is a

settlement of the acc't, that I make myself accountable to you for one half the profit of the office (this I confess I do not thoroughly understand) indemnify you from any demand from Mr. Hancock for Types, &c and that I find employ for your two Boys till you can employ them yourself.

As it is of importance to you that you have an immediate answer it is this—I am willing the acc't should be settled and settled with *Equity* and *Justice*, and to indemnify you from any demand from Mr. Hancock for Types, &c as I suppose is possible. I am also willing to employ your two boys and learn them the Art [here the word "trade" was crossed out] if we can agree as to that matter.

"I now, Sir, beg leave to inform you that my affairs are in confusion, my creditors (for material to carry on Business) are pressing me for pay which has become due. No accounts have been kept, on my side, of the Business as I have waited until the copartnership should commence between us but as it never commenced they have been undone. I told you at first, and I know by experience that the Business would not maintain two families and pay such heavy debts, as I had unavoidably contracted and which I have now got to pay. But, Sir, for your past Services I am very willing to allow you what is reasonable and right, as I esteem you a private and publick friend and a friend to the Country. You have my prayers for your own and your family's prosperity and happiness, and, in the meantime, I hope nothing may happen to divide our joint friendship. Yours with respect,

I. THOMAS.<sup>13</sup>

This letter gives us some inside history regarding the conditions of business for Isaiah Thomas after two years of turbulent activity while he was publishing the *Spy*. It helps to visualize, in a measure, his life and

surroundings. With characteristic defiance he had started the New Year of 1772 with some bold columns and blithe Merry Christmas and New Year's Verses, delivered by the postboys to the subscribers, in which sounds another challenge:

Hail, happy day, important year!  
Be more propitious than the last.  
In thee let mighty *Truth* appear.  
And every tool and tyrant blast!

In December, he moved his printing-shop from the first location in Union Street to "the South Corner of Marshall Lane, leading from the Mill Bridge into Union Street." On January 16th<sup>14</sup> he published a long, somewhat involved, article, signed CRISPIN, with the explanation, "The reader is desired to excuse the publication of Crispin's performance, it is necessary it be known what common people, even COBBLERS, think and feel under the present administration." In the Poets' Corner in February<sup>15</sup> an imitative discourse, in crude verse by "A Modern Talif," Esq., has the closing couplet:

However lordly fools would be!  
*Forever* shall the *Press* be *Free*.

The issue for March 5th had the usual black border to recall the Boston Massacre and a Biblical warning by "The Centinel"; "He that Sheddeth Man's Blood by Man shall his Blood be Shed." An adaptation from Shakespeare,<sup>16</sup> with skull and bones as illustration, includes the lines:

They would not have me mention Massacre!  
 Forbid my tongue to speak of Massacre!

and follows the quotation with a record of the five Countrymen, "basely and most inhumanely Murdered and Six Others badly Wounded." Thomas was a forerunner of the "Remember the Maine!" agitators.

How was life going on with his young wife during these political excitements? On March 27, 1772, she gave birth to a daughter, Mary Ann, who was destined to have a restless marital life, with three marriages and two separations, carrying on the family history of her father. It is not likely that young Mary Dill Thomas became excited with patriotism over these political conditions in New England which so absorbed the thoughts and time of her husband. She may have had many lonely hours. Perhaps she sought entertainment in avenues suggested by the details in the divorce libel which her husband brought against her a few years later. Perhaps she found passing entertainment in a "show," advertised in the *Spy*, August 29, 1771: "There is arrived in town this day, and to be seen at the house of the widow Bignall, the next door to the King's Head Tavern, a little above Mr. Hancock's Wharf, A Maiden Dwarf, who is *fifty-three years old*, and of but *twenty-two* inches in stature." This attraction "would exhibit herself as a shew to such Gentlemen and Ladies as are desirous to gratify their curiosity for *one shilling*, lawful money from each person." Mr. Robert W. G. Vail, librarian of the Ameri-

can Antiquarian Society and an authority on early American "shows" and circuses, tells me that this is the earliest recorded exhibition of a "freak" in America.

In Chapter III an extract was given of a letter which Isaiah Thomas wrote to some correspondent in Bermuda, possibly his father-in-law, Joseph Dill, in which he gave the information that his wife was anxious to return to her native country. No such change came to her life. She remained in the political storm-center of Boston. On September 5, 1773, a son, Isaiah Thomas, Jr., was born. Their mother had gone out from his home life before he had achieved wealth and honor in Worcester and Boston, but the children and their children, with nephews and nieces, benefited in large measure from the prosperity which Isaiah Thomas wrested from these hard years of fighting against poverty and political opposition.

## CHAPTER VI

### EVENTS THAT LED TO LEXINGTON AND TO WORCESTER

ALL readers of Boston newspapers from 1771 to 1775 will realize how slow but sure was the revolution of feeling against British rule and how inevitable was the bloodshed on Lexington Common on April 19, 1775. The Royalists voiced their defense and their hopes of avoiding war through the columns of the Draper newspaper, the *Boston News Letter* with its variations of title, and its companion, for a brief period, the *Massachusetts Gazette*, printed by Green and Russell. In May, 1774, Richard Draper took as his partner John Boyle, the bookseller; a month later Draper died and his widow, Margaret, like many another woman of her time, took over his business and carried on the newspaper until the British evacuated Boston, in 1776. The language of this newspaper was always restrained and deferential to the Crown. Its contributors seldom forgot their "elegance of diction," but if they did, it was when they were defending Draper against Isaiah Thomas.

The *Boston Evening Post*, published first by Thomas Fleet and later by his sons, Thomas and John (until April, 1775) was impartial in its tone in the earlier days of this paper. In 1741, the elder Fleet had been

accused of publishing "a scandalous and libellious [sic] reflection upon his Majesty's Administration." He escaped serious results from "the information" lodged against him, but he and his sons became cautious, although never timorous. With appreciation, Isaiah Thomas, whose relations with the Fleets were friendly, wrote of these printers and their paper, "The impartiality with which the paper was conducted, in those most critical times, the authenticity of its news, and the judicious selection of its publishers, gained them great and deserved reputation."<sup>1</sup>

Less rabid than Thomas's *Spy*—yet in sympathy with the cause of the patriots—was the *Boston Gazette or County Journal*. Its influence was acknowledged especially among the younger and the more independent, well-educated people in the community. In general, the articles in the *Gazette* were superior and less bitter than those in the *Spy*. One of the most virile, fearless contributors was Josiah Quincy, Jr., who wrote under the pen-name of "Needham's Remembrancer," a series which began in the issue of December 20, 1772. Both the *Gazette* and the *Spy* were tending towards an open issue—that of self-government for the colonies. If the writers in the paper published by Thomas were much more radical and daring, this was due, in part, to the fervor of the youthful publisher—for he was only twenty-six years old in 1775—and also to the classes of his constituency, who would welcome direct, coarse and bombastic words rather than those of more restraint.



The more than forty articles by "Centinel" were more academic in tone, but less readable. Their authorship was a puzzle and, so far as I know, has not been divulged. Governor Hutchinson expressed a wish to know who wrote them; John Adams knew but would not tell.

According to the stories which Isaiah Thomas related in later years, he had been approached by the Tories with offers to change his political creed and to publish a paper in *their* interests—and greatly to *his* own benefit in a financial way. He was, however, an active Son of Liberty. Some of their meetings were held at his office. Among his friends was Paul Revere with whom he co-operated for occasional illustrations of hand-bills, which he printed for sale on the streets. They collaborated on the original design for the first Masonic emblem "executed" in Boston.

While there are lacking dates or specific details about the attempts to intimidate, and even to injure the person of Thomas, such attacks were doubtless made upon him. As an indication of the spread of his influence, he and the *Spy* were burned in effigy in North Carolina, by the Royalists. Twice he was threatened with assassination, once warned by a British officer, whom he had befriended, that his name was among those "proscribed." The most spectacular warning was thus described by him:<sup>2</sup>

A soldier in one of the British regiments stationed in Boston, instigated by his officers, inveigled a countryman, one Thomas

Ditson, jun. of Billerica, to purchase a musket. When the purchase was made, the officers appeared, and the countryman was taken into custody, under pretence of enticing the soldier to steal and sell the property of the king, &c. The countryman was kept under guard during the night. Before daylight the next morning, after a sham trial in the barracks, he was stripped of his clothes and coated from head to foot with tar and feathers; the soldiers then bound him in a chair to a trunk, and before sunrise he was paraded by a regiment through the streets. The regiment, with the colonel at its head, halted before the Spy office, the music playing the Rogues March; some of the soldiers vociferating, "The printer of the Spy shall be the next to receive this punishment."

This "riot," as Thomas calls the affair, took place on March 10, 1775. He adds: "It occasioned great commotion among the citizens, and produced a well written and spirited remonstrance from the town of Billerica to the governor, Gage." There had been earlier "spirited remonstrances" to Governor Hutchinson, in the pages of the *Spy*, and these impelled the second attempt to bring an indictment against the printer, in the late 1772. One of the most excoriating columns was written by "Rusticus," representing the rural sentiment for freedom of the colonies—for by this time the goal had been openly declared.

Feeling grew more tense, as the tea-ships were due, and the committee of correspondence, led by Samuel Adams, urged the consignees of the cargoes of tea to resign. Isaiah Thomas was prominent among those at the meeting at Faneuil Hall when the representatives from

Cambridge, Brookline, Roxbury and Dorchester met with those from Boston to declare against allowing the tea ships to land. It was not alone Massachusetts but other colonies that were aroused, as the columns of "American Intelligence" in the *Spy* emphasized. The meeting of November 28th, with five thousand people, which began in Faneuil Hall and adjourned to the Old South Meeting-House, and its vote to refuse landing of the tea was equaled by the meeting in Philadelphia of a similar number and swift action. There was no lack of "news" for the Whig newspapers.

The Boston Port Bill and other regulatory measures aroused the country. The publisher of the *Massachusetts Spy* sought to extend the influence of his paper beyond this colony. He resorted to several devices to increase the number of subscribers, already totaling twenty-five hundred. It was now called *Thomas's Massachusetts Spy*. He chose new insignia which were probably originated by Benjamin Franklin. A venomous looking dragon and a less ugly snake were the "end-men." The dragon represented Great Britain, and the snake the colonies. The former tried to poison the snake with its stings. The snake was divided into nine parts; the head, marked *N.E.*, was symbolic of New England; two and three, marked *N.Y.* and *N.J.*, were easily recognized as New York and New Jersey. Other colonies were included with alphabetical "keys," *P.* and *M.* for Pennsylvania and Maryland; *V.* for Virginia, *N.C.* and *S.C.* for the Carolinas and the ninth part, the tail,

G., for Georgia. Suspended over the snake was the warning, "Join or Die!" This had been printed at Burlington, New Jersey, in 1768, in the *Constitutional Courant*.

For two years Isaiah Thomas had chosen, for his slogan, the quotation from Addison's *Cato*, printed at the top of the first page of the *Spy*:

Do thou, great Liberty, inspire our souls,  
And make our Lives in thy possession happy  
Or our Death glorious in thy just defense.

He often called attention to publications of new plays by patriotic writers, like Royall Tyler, Hugh Henry Breckenridge, and Mercy Warren, sister of the ill-fated James Otis. Good space was given to notices of such satires upon British officers as "The Group" and "The Adulateur." In the column known as "The Poets' Corner," were lines from John Dickinson and odes and ballads by other daring versifiers, although these generally appeared anonymously. "Ode to Independence," with its refrain in the chorus of "Huzza!" was a sample of these verses in the *Spy*, April 6, 1775. In keeping with the custom of the times, Harvard College Lotteries were advertised, "Tickets to be sold by I. Thomas." Foreseeing the scarcity of paper, when the supply from England should be curtailed, he advertised for "Rags" for this purpose. His newspaper was up-to-date in its news columns, so far as was possible in those days of slow communication.

It would seem as if the ambition of Thomas might

have been satisfied by his growing influence in Boston and his close association with men of affairs and of education there. He was anxious, however, to extend his journalistic ventures and to expand his printing to include magazines and books. This goal was before him for many years until he achieved its fruition, after the war and recovery from its aftermath. Impatient of delay, however, and immune to possible failure of his ambitions, he decided to publish a journal while he was still printing the *Spy*, in 1774.

The *Royal American Magazine*, as its title was to be, was announced by Thomas in the *Spy* several months before the first number appeared in January, 1774. Its Address was effusive: "To the general Patrons and Promoters of Useful Knowledge, The Editor of the *Royal American Magazine* presents his most respectful Compliments, and informs them, that the first number will undoubtedly appear on the first of January next, and humbly requesting the favour of their Lucubrations, which he promises to convey to the world with the greatest care and attention. I. Thomas." In the same issue was advertised *Thomas's Boston Sheet Almanack*, which will be recalled later in the chapter on his Almanacks.

If those who intended to send him their "Lucubrations" should read the first column of page two of this number of the *Spy*, they might be daunted—or more likely amused, as we are—by this droll Parody on Hamlet's Soliloquy:

To *Print* or not to *Print*—that is the question,  
Whether 'tis better in a trunk to bury  
The quirks and crotchets of outrageous fancy,  
Or send a well wrote Essay to the press  
(No matter which, whether on timid *cowardice* or *courage*)  
And by imprinting, end them. To print, no doubt,  
No more; and by one act to say we end.

He sent to England for types for this new magazine. The ship which was bringing them ran aground off Cape Cod and a delay ensued, with unexpected expense for the printer. The magazine was an octavo, with large type. Each number contained three sheets of letter press, and two copper plate engravings. The full title was *The Royal American Magazine, or Universal Repository of Instruction and Amusement*. It survived that cumbersome phrasing for six months when, because of lack of funds, Thomas was obliged to "first suspend, and afterwards relinquish it; but Joseph Greenleaf continued the publication until April following, when the war put a period to the magazine. . . . It had a considerable list of subscribers."<sup>3</sup> Governor Hutchinson's *History of Massachusetts Bay* appeared in this magazine.

Thomas was proud of the design which he had chosen and reproduced for the title-page, "an aboriginal American seated on the ground; at her feet lay a quiver, and near her a bow on which her right hand rested; in her left hand she held the calumet of peace, which she appeared to offer to the Genius of Knowledge standing before her dispensing instruction."<sup>4</sup> The price

was ten shillings, eight pence for subscribers. There were several well-known engravings by Paul Revere, one of Boston harbor. The last issue of this magazine, with its varied but not brilliant "Lucubrations," with Thomas's name on it, was August 10, 1774. More interesting for readers of today was the "Oration" delivered by John Hancock on March 5, 1774, which was advertised and sold by Thomas as printer.

Another venture lured Isaiah Thomas to financial risk, during these crucial years before the outbreak of hostilities, namely, the establishment of a newspaper at Newburyport, in 1773. According to his recollections, this was done "At the request of several gentlemen, particularly the late Rev. Jonathan Parsons." One of his apprentices in Boston had been Henry Walter Tinges, Boston-born of Dutch ancestry. With Tinges to manage the business under direction of Thomas, they opened a printing house in King Street, Newburyport. The firm's name was Thomas & Tinges. The newspaper was burdened with one of Thomas's long titles: *The Essex Journal, and Merrimack Packet: Or, the Massachusetts and New Hampshire General Advertiser*. The first number appeared December 4, 1773, printed on a crown sheet and equal in size to most of the papers in Boston; the day of publication was, at first, Saturday, then Wednesday. Fittingly, one side of the "cut" represented a ship; the other had the arms of the province.

After about a year, Thomas sold his rights in the paper to Ezra Lunt with whom Tinges remained; later

the firm was Tinges & Mycall, and the latter continued the business alone for twenty years.<sup>5</sup>

Overtures from another town were made to Isaiah Thomas in 1774 and his compliance later led to a permanent change in his environment. Among the men who took loyal and active part in the patriot cause were two from Worcester, Timothy Bigelow and William Stearns. They were anxious, as were many others in Worcester and surrounding villages, to have a press established there and a newspaper. They waited upon Isaiah Thomas in December, 1774, and he agreed that, as soon as could be arranged, he would send a press and a printer to manage such a publishing house—probably this would be in the following spring.

The removal of press and printer to Worcester came more suddenly than was anticipated. By February, 1775, village greens in Massachusetts, from Cambridge to Worcester, were training "minute men" and the committees of safety, with Dr. Joseph Warren as head, were to collect military stores and be ready for any action, should Gage try to enforce the Regulating Act. Samuel Adams had been a representative to the Continental Congress at Philadelphia. Again he had refused, with indignant protest, the terms of peace—if he would "change his course" or otherwise "suffer penalties and trial in England." To the messenger who brought this alternative, he made the famous reply, which must have been heartily echoed by Isaiah Thomas, the patriot-printer: "Sir, I have long since made my peace



with the King of Kings. No personal considerations shall induce me to abandon the righteous cause of my country. Tell Governor Gage it is the advice of Samuel Adams to him no longer to insult the feelings of an exasperated people."

Thomas went to Concord to see Adams and Hancock and to tell them of the threats which had been made upon his life; he says he was twice menaced with assassination, but he gives no specific dates or facts. He sent his wife and two children to Watertown and probably expected that he and his press might soon go there. Hancock and Dr. Joseph Warren urged him to hasten his departure lest he might lose his press, if not his life. At night, on the 16th of April, with the aid of Dr. Warren and Timothy Bigelow of Worcester (then Captain and later Colonel) Thomas's press and some of his types were taken across the ferry to Charlestown and thence over the road to Worcester. Here they were placed in a room in the cellar of the house of Timothy Bigelow, at the northern end of the main street of the town.

Thomas did not go to Worcester that night but he joined his friends in Boston, probably Paul Revere among them, and was ready for any service which he could give by voice or pen. He spoke, with Dr. Joseph Warren, at a meeting in Charlestown but was opposed "by one Mr. Robinson on principles of prudence."<sup>6</sup> He had urged the people to prepare for a conflict and to secure arms. On the morning of April 19th he was in

Lexington, on the green, either as a minute-man or a spectator of the scene which he was soon to describe in vivid words.

On the morning of April 20th, after a brief visit to his family, he began on foot the journey of about forty miles to Worcester. He was often delayed by fellow-travelers who talked with him about the events of the previous day. After walking many miles he was loaned a horse by a friend and arrived late at night. He had left behind him, in Boston, half of his types and many tools, about three thousand dollars' worth of uncollected subscriptions and many friends. He came to a strange place with slight resources but with the courage and vitality which seemed unailing.

When Isaiah Thomas looked about him the next morning he saw a town, incorporated more than fifty-years before, with broad streets and fine houses. On the village green, which was in the center, was a schoolhouse at one end and a meeting-house at the other; on the porch of the latter building he was to play a part the next year in one of the spectacular events in his life story. Worcester had a large quota of Tories among its prominent families. John Adams, as a young man, had studied law, taught school here, and often been entertained by some of these royalists, the Chandlers, Putnams and Paines.

By contrast to such political affiliations, there were strong elements of resistance to any acts of Parliament which violated liberty. When the Representatives to

the General Court had been chosen, in 1767, they were given various instructions, among them "the Maintenance of the liberty of the press." Another instruction at that same time is amusing but significant of the growing independence: "that you use your endeavour to relieve the people of this province from the great burden of supporting so many Latin grammar schools, whereby they are prevented from attaining such a degree of *English learning as is necessary* to retain the freedom of any State."

One of the important conventions of the Committees of Correspondence was held in Worcester, in September 21, 1774; and a convention of blacksmiths, on September 8, 1774, with forty-three members, had elected Timothy Bigelow as clerk. It was known that Worcester was a depot for provisions of beef, pork, grain and flour, and munitions of war. Some of the housewives had contributed pewter plates as material for bullets. Boston troops were prepared to march into Worcester to "take vengeance on the rebels." A report made by some of those sent to examine the roads was published. They stayed at Jones Tavern over Sunday because they "did not dare to travel. Nobody is allowed to walk the streets during service, without being taken up and examined." The landlord, who seemed to identify them, offered "to give them tea or anything else for breakfast." Isaiah Thomas said that he saw a plan (after the British had left Boston) of Worcester, in which the soldiers would erect "an extensive encampment, with

fortress, on Chandler Hill, the eminence commanding the town to the east."

During March, minute men had been trained half a day each week by Timothy Bigelow; they received one shilling for each service but were fined the same amount for absence. Later, in Cambridge, these minute men from Worcester were praised by Lieutenant Hubbard for their excellent training. On the day of the "fight" at Lexington and Concord Bridge, a messenger on horseback, "on a white steed," had ridden through the town, shouting, "To arms! The war is begun." Captain Bigelow and his men had started for Cambridge before Isaiah Thomas arrived in Worcester. He would have liked to join some group of these fighters but he was told he could do better service with his press. Although his friend, Captain Bigelow, had left Worcester with his company by April 20th, after "a grand parade and a prayer on the village green by Rev. Dr. Maccarty," there were a few kindly associates for the young printer. Edward Bangs, who was later to be attorney-general, was one of the first and most loyal friends of Thomas in Worcester. Thomas lodged with the Lyndes and later lived in the Dix home, where, for a time after the Battle of Bunker Hill, were the children of Dr. Joseph Warren, cared for here by Margaret Scollay to whom Dr. Warren was engaged at the time of his death at Bunker Hill.

Nearly opposite the home of Captain Timothy Bigelow, in whose cellar the press of Thomas was placed

**The Massachusetts Spy**  
Or, American ORACLE of Liberty.

4 NUMB. 219

[illegible]

**BAY**  
Continued from page 248

We shall have what might be called a splendid alien-  
age, to the King, and the reason that  
Wales, Jersey, Guernsey and Ireland stand in in the  
realm of England, as they do not effect the solution  
of our present condition.

I. The MARCHANTTS OF AMERICAN  
ORACLE OF LIBERTY, shall be printed on good  
paper, manufactured in this province, with a neat  
type.

For it is demon-  
strated, as there was a case when the  
columns were dissolved from the realm, and the  
former authority of the parent race, that they are  
now united there is evidence of a subsequent con-  
fusion. It is to be wished that those who keep eternally  
harping upon our being annexed to the British realm  
would point out the proofs in that regard.—There is  
none in nature: I challenge them to produce any.

The next ancient paragraph from our letter  
shows, we have declared in our third and fourth  
number, and have shown the first right to con-  
sideration, and the second, and the latter  
to be absolutely inconsistent with, and repugnant to,  
every principle and plan of our being a part of the  
British empire and subject to its foreign power.

The third paragraph is to take them up in their  
place.

"The last returned clause from this charter, we have  
"is considered, the foolishness of which is, that all and  
"every of the subjects of the King of England, his heirs  
"and successors, who should go to and inhabit in the  
"Mackinac colony, and all their children, born in  
"the said colony, or on the said islands should have and enjoy  
"all the liberties and immunities of free and natural bor-  
"n subjects within any of the dominions of the King, his  
"heirs and successors in all respects and purposes whatso-  
"ever, as if they were, and every of them, born within  
"the said islands."

"I have already, says our writer, seen that the suppression of our being exempted from the authority of Parliament, as pregnant with the greatest abridgment.—No moral exempting himself has ever been able to do this abridgment. We have seen what false empty professions amounted to in a paid paper, and how vain the abridgements were impossible." *Yes* we saw. For he, consider this clause in connection with

[illegible]

His New paper is the first thing ever  
printed in Worcester.

FIRST COPY OF THE "MASSACHUSETTS SPY" AFTER ITS  
REMOVAL FROM BOSTON TO WORCESTER IN 1775



temporarily, was the "mansion" of Stephen Salisbury. It stood until recent years on this site, at Lincoln Square in Worcester, but has been removed to a lot where stands the later Salisbury home, now the Art Museum School, near the Worcester Auditorium. Stephen Salisbury, brother of Samuel Salisbury of Boston had come to this town to continue the prosperity of the family as merchants. Joseph and Samuel Adams, nephews of the patriotic Samuel Adams, were among the young men of influence in Worcester when Thomas arrived here. The population was approximately 1,900. It was already a place of social rank.

May 3, 1775, was the date of the first issue of the *Massachusetts Spy or American Oracle of Liberty* in Worcester. It bore the challenge, "Americans! Liberty or Death!" Ingenuity and perseverance had been shown by Thomas in bringing out this newspaper within two weeks after its removal from Boston. Types and tools were limited but paper was even more difficult to obtain. Probably a small supply had been brought with the press.

One of the most helpful friends of Isaiah Thomas in his newspaper venture, both in Boston and Worcester, was John Hancock. With Samuel Adams, he was staying in Worcester for a few days after leaving Lexington, awaiting escort to Philadelphia. From letters written by him at Worcester we find valuable information regarding his plight and desire to aid Thomas at this time. Some of those, once treasured by Mr.

Thomas, are now lost but one remains in its entirety. Apparently, Hancock had sent other letters to the Committee of Safety in response to which they voted, on April 29, 1775, "that four reams of paper be immediately ordered to Worcester for the use of Mr. Thomas, printer; he to be accountable."

Here is the complete text of the letter of April 26, 1775, with the signature of John Hancock, and addressed to Joseph Warren and Other Gentlemen of the Committee of Safety:

WORCESTER 26 April 1775

GENT<sup>m</sup>

Mr. Thomas the Printer is here, fix'd his Press & Ready to go on with Business, but is in want of Paper. I undertake for him to Desire you will order the undermentioned Quantity to be Sent him from Milton, his being Supplied with it will answer Publick Service. We are not like to have even a Single Person to attend us. Mr. Paine is here, his Townsmen who come with him are Return'd home. My servants, horse, furniture, is in Boston. I should not like to be Demolish'd by a Tory, but I must Submit to be unnotic'd. God Bless You.

I am Gent,

Your Sincere Friend,

JOHN HANCOCK

Paper for Mr. Thomas

50 Reams crown Printing

40 do. Demy do

20 do. Fools Cap, do.

5 do. writing.

Committee of Safety.

If this request by Mr. Hancock and later supplies had been granted, the story of the next year, with its



handicaps for the printer, would have been less disappointing.

Another letter of source-material regarding this period in the life of Isaiah Thomas, and his struggles to get support from the government, is among the valuable letters by him, now possessed by the New York Historical Society. This will be quoted in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER VII

### A GALLANT FIGHT AND A RETREAT

FOR nearly a year Isaiah Thomas fought valiantly to maintain his newspaper in Worcester and to finance his printing-shop. The columns of the *Spy* tell the story, in large part. A more impressive tale was narrated years later by Benjamin Russell, the first apprentice of Thomas in Worcester and his devoted friend through life. He was the substitute in the army for Thomas when the latter was drafted for service, in 1780. The life of Benjamin Russell is a dramatic story; we are concerned with the portion which links his name with that of the veteran printer.

Benjamin Russell was a native of Boston. At the age of sixteen he was a pupil in a school to which his father, a Mason, made generous contributions. The lad says, however, that he "spent much time in the printing-shop of Isaiah Thomas." Here he became quite facile in setting type. On the morning of April 19th, at the school where Master Carter presided, the word was spoken: "Boys, the war's begun and you may run." Excited by the unexpected holiday, young Russell and two companions hurried out and followed the detachment of British soldiers who were marching, under command of Lord Percy, to reinforce the soldiers at

Concord. They passed into Cambridge. During the day the bridge over the Charles River was taken up and the troops returned by ferry from Cambridge to Boston. The boys, however, found themselves "stranded, and fed and sheltered by Cambridge selectmen and others." There were no telephones nor radio to inform the anxious parents about the whereabouts of their sons.

When the minute-men and militia assembled in Cambridge, young Russell, with his comrades, attached themselves to the officers, as errand-boys. One day in August, Benjamin Russell was carrying a basket of provisions to the encampment of General Putnam when he saw his father and his uncle passing by in a chaise; "My father jumped from the chaise and gave me the hardest flogging I ever had." The next move on the part of this excited and irate father was to take his son in his chaise to Worcester and leave him with Isaiah Thomas as his apprentice.

This apprentice has visualized the life in that "office" of the *Spy*, in Worcester. He describes how the "master," as well as his two young apprentices, sat on the rags taken in from time to time for making paper, in response to the advertisements, or appeals in the newspaper. Sometimes they slept on these rags in the garret over the shop. All the "office-force," including the master, would often make their meals of bread and milk bought by the penny-worth at a time.

Another reminiscence by this apprentice, Russell, is of a time about a year after he came to Worcester.<sup>1</sup> The

day after Thomas had read the Declaration of Independence—a scene to be described in a later chapter—Russell says that all had been drinking, in their excitement, too much punch

at the public tavern and found they had enlisted as private soldiers in the army—a recruiting officer being then in town. Thomas was very angry and immediately set about procuring my release; He could hardly go on with his business without me, but his principal plea, and that which proved successful, was that I was not sixteen years of age, and consequently that the officer had transcended his power by enlisting me. I was taken before a justice of the peace, and being duly sworn, was asked if I was sixteen years old. I was quite willing to leave my employment and join the army, and without giving a direct reply, said that I could not swear to my age, as I had no very exact recollections of the day when I was born, or of any circumstances attending my birth, that could lead me to fix the precise day. I was discharged, however, on the presumption that the enlistment was not strictly legal.

This narrative would suggest two reflections—one, that the day of pert, wise-cracking youth had begun by 1775; another, that Isaiah Thomas must now begin to realize the anxieties and annoyances which he, as an adventurous apprentice, must have given his master, Zechariah Fowle. To the *Spy*, young Russell would contribute paragraphs and “slip these under the door.” Once when he changed a word in one of his own compositions that was anonymous, he was reprimanded by Mr. Thomas. It was thought Timothy Bigelow might have written this daring challenge but *he* said, “I think

Ben wrote it—it looks like him; he is full of the spirit of revolution, his notions are Yankee, all over.”<sup>2</sup>

In spite of the daring spirit of this young apprentice and his devotion to his master, there were hard times in that publishing-shop during 1775 and 1776. Four things were necessary for the success of the *Spy*—more paper, more subscribers and prompt payment by those who subscribed, increase of facilities for circulating and “posting” the paper, and support of the government. Urgent advertising for rags—even appeals to the women to sacrifice some of their linen for the purpose—appeared often in the columns of the paper. Cut off from exports of both paper and ink from England, all printers were sadly handicapped for a few years. In a tone of patient appeal the publisher “begs his subscribers” (now only about two hundred, in contrast with the three thousand and more, left in Boston and vicinity) *to pay their bills*; he stresses how much they are obtaining in “intelligence” and “elegant contributions.”

That he might get into personal touch with political affairs at Philadelphia, he made a journey, partly on foot, to see the leaders of the Continental Congress. He recorded that innkeepers and private houses gave him entertainment and good-speed and that boatmen took him, without charge, over ferries. Doubtless, one object in his going to Philadelphia was to secure the establishment of a post-office, and of himself as post-master, at Worcester, for this was a most desirable condition for the success of the *Spy*. He obtained his desires

in the fall of 1775; was appointed through the influence of Benjamin Franklin, and reappointed for many successive years until 1802. The next year, 1776, Franklin paid one of many visits to Worcester and to the shop of Thomas, as Benjamin Russell recalled.

The *Spy*, November 17, 1775, announced the establishment of a Constitutional Post-Office, Isaiah Thomas, postmaster, and the mail schedules: "Eastern Post closes Tuesday evening at six o'clock and Western Friday morning at nine o'clock." The western post arrived on Tuesday and the eastern on Friday. Political "Intelligence" and literary contributions mingle with advertisements and social news. In the September 29th issue was printed the famous Speech of Burke on Conciliation. Two months later is the record: "The ladies of Excellency General Washington and lady of General Gates passed through this town on their way to Cambridge." Sometimes the paper was only one sheet on Fridays, because of lack of paper. From the *Connecticut Courant* was reprinted, in the *Spy* of May 3, 1776, "A New Song; The Watery God."<sup>3</sup> This symbolical poem by an anonymous satirist, was widely quoted, especially the last two stanzas (viii and ix):

Neptune with vast amazement hears,  
How great this infant state appears,  
What feats their heroes do;  
Washington's deeds and Putnam's fame,  
Joined to great Lee's immortal name,  
And cries, Can this be true?

A Congress! sure they're brother Gods  
Who have such heroes at their nods  
To govern earth and sea;  
I yield my trident and my crown,  
A tribute due to such renown,  
These Gods shall rule for me.

Among the advertisements was one of an urgent need of the hour: "Any person in this or the neighboring towns, who is willing to contract for the making of fifty to an hundred barrels of good LAMPBLACK, free from grit and dirt (for which a good price will be allowed) may apply to I. Thomas."

The editor and publisher of this newspaper must have suffered often from persistent but undesirable "contributors." He could not send them a polite but unanswerable "rejection slip." In his paper, August 16, 1775, he reports: "The pieces signed Philelutheros, are received but as the Printer would by all means avoid a paper war, at present, he begs the author would excuse him from giving them a place in the *Massachusetts Spy*."

We have no means of identifying the author with the unusual, classical pseudonym of Philelutheros. Among the Thomas Papers are found one or two other very illegible articles, "Written for the *Massachusetts Spy*," which were not printed. What caused the "feud"—for such it really became—between Mr. Thomas and "the minister of Sutton," in the winter of 1775, may be conjectured. Sutton, now a beautiful hilltop town of about

2,145 inhabitants, eleven miles from Worcester was, in 1775, a rival of the city that now has 200,000 people. Sutton had a paper-mill, operated by Abijah Bigelow, who was also constable. Probably, Isaiah Thomas got some of his paper from this source before 1793 when he built his own mill at Quinsigamond and employed there ten men and eleven girls and turned out fourteen hundred pounds of paper weekly.

In Sutton, when Thomas was struggling to publish the *Spy*, there were two "divines," the Reverend Mr. David Hall and the Reverend Mr. Ebenezer Chaplin. If the latter minister had kept a diary as detailed as was that of Mr. Hall, with careful notes about his "calls," his efforts to collect his salary, the summary of his household expenses, and of his prayers, with regret for "the Carnality of his Heart," it would be less difficult to explain the bitter feelings of Mr. Chaplin toward the publisher of the *Spy*.

Abijah Burbank, paper-mill owner, was a member of the Second Parish, the name of the church over which Mr. Chaplin presided. The sermons in which he denounced Isaiah Thomas (under a thin veil) must have had unpleasant results for the printer. It would seem likely that the minister's first mood was one of pique because Thomas did not print some of the "Lucubrations" which this divine sent to the office of the *Spy*. This surmise is verified in a postscript to "a pungent" editorial, or as Thomas called it, "Advertisement, Ordinary and Extraordinary, To the Important Public,"



which appeared in the *Spy*, November 3, 1775. One is impressed, in reading this, by the choice of effective words:

To the Impartial Public

A Certain *reverend Divine*, in this neighborhood, having lately taken it into his head to be affronted with me for declining to publish in this paper, certain pieces, replete with low, malicious and ungrammatical *scurrility*, has, under the auspices of Vulcan, hammered out a Discourse, the principal *design* of which, though pretended to be levelled against Idolatry, is really to Injure me, and to diminish my business.

This Discourse he has had the *effrontery* to deliver Thrice from the Sacred Desk: Thereby giving a specimen of his great *piety* and Malice! ! And in order to carry his *benevolent* purpose into execution he has told his several hearers, that the motto at the head of the Massachusetts *Spy*, "*Do thou, great Liberty, &c.*" is a "rank Idolatry" and has asserted that the printer is a Tory! !

As to the Motto, I would just inform my kind readers, who may have been influenced in some degree by his *insinuations*, that it was taken from the truly learned and religious Mr. Addison—and that the expression which is only figurative, is no more than a prayer to God, who wills the happiness of his creatures, that HE would "inspire our souls" with the genuine principles of Liberty, Civil and Sacred—as when the sacred writers exclaim, "*Hear, O Earth,*" they mean to address the inhabitants of the Earth. This my *loving* and *learned* Friend did not know! !

And as it Evidently appears *without evidence*, that I am "a Tory," I hereby warn all who are by him thus convicted, to break off all commercial connexions with me, and thereby prevent their being *deemed Enemies* to their Country! !

I. THOMAS

N.B. Some Specimens of this *good* man's abilities as an Author, may possibly appear in some future Paper.

Without success, search has been made for this sermon that was preached "thrice." It took courage for a printer, comparatively young and new to the neighborhood to defy *any* minister in the days when the influence of the church was so potent a factor in the lives of the people. Undoubtedly, Thomas was duly angered by such unjust, rabid words about him and his paper. Probably his answering "Advertisement, Ordinary and Extraordinary," reacted against him as a contributory factor in his undoing at Worcester. That he was justified in refusing to print such "low and ungrammatical" words as were used by the Rev. Mr. Chaplin is verified in an extract which the same "divine" preached May 5, 1776, just before Thomas left Worcester, from the text Psalm 92:6, with references indirectly to the *Spy* and printer:

The Brutish Man is the Man that don't (sic) exercise Reason with respect to God and Sp'l Things don't raise his Thoughts to God but like the Brutes grovels in sensual apprehension (sic) and has narrow, contracted, ignorant Notions of the Deity and ascribes to Fortune, Chance, Creatures or to any heathen Deity and not to the True God, the Occurences of Divine Providence. . . . Learn what brutish thing it is to ascribe so much to the heathen Deities as has for so long a Time been in the Publick Mouth of the Land; and now last week's Paper offers another Heathen God in a stupid brutish Song, entitled "The Water Gods" [reference to the Song, "The Watery God," quoted earlier in this chapter] and thus we are taught

as many Gods as there are Elements, Plants, Creatures animate and inanimate. But the Lord is most high over all and will not give his glory and honour to be tramped upon by such brutish fool that are ignorant of him & so void of understanding his Works.

More daring in phrases, with use of Biblical language which is usually expurgated, this Reverend Mr. Chaplin preached another sermon, on January 29, 1777, aimed against "Sinners in Zion" and Hypocrites; the text was from Isaiah 33: 14, 15, 16. It may be relevant to recall a few words again from this preacher, whose influence had been so baneful to the printer and his paper:

Who can endure these terrible times. Who can stand it thro these terrible Times like devouring Fire and everlasting Burnings? ... The Rigs (Righteous) were to be carried thro it; they should have an impenetrable fortress to secure them and should be provided for tho' the Famine should there be one as Reb. threatened, tho' he threaten'd they should have nothing to eat but their Dung and yet they should have bread, tho' he threaten'd they should have nothing to drink... yet their Water shall be sure...but the Hypocrites there is no security promised to them...but this which they call Devouring Fire and everlasting Burning shall be so to them, they shall be burned up with it, and all the better, the state will be much better without them than with them when it is purged of such wretches that both in peace and war, but more in war than any Time for then they are weakening the State both by their own laziness and discouraging of others and disheartening them by their Clamours and Flattery.

Before leaving the subject of this friction between the Sutton pastor and the printer of the *Spy*, it may be well to remember that Mr. Thomas often published sermons preached by the Reverend Mr. Thaddeus Maccarty of Worcester, with whom he was friendly, and that later he became an intimate friend and loyal supporter of the Reverend Mr. Aaron Bancroft (the father of George Bancroft, the historian) who came to Worcester, first as a substitute for Mr. Maccarty in the latter's illness, and returned later to become the leader of a group from the First Parish that was to form the Second Parish, with more liberal theology.

The hope that the Massachusetts officials would give to Thomas the job of printing their publications and handbills and other materials, which he had issued for them in Boston, and that they would give encouragement to his *Spy* in Worcester, as they had before by paying for their subscriptions, was one of the expectations which he cherished for several weeks after he changed the location of his press. That the *Spy* should be permanently located in Worcester was not assured. He recalled that he was advised to come to Concord with his outfit but, by the time he could arrive there, the Congress had adjourned to Watertown where the state affairs were administered. That the Committee *did* accede to the request of John Hancock and send some paper to Thomas for his newspaper has been noted. In addition they showed another impulse to help the printer in his new location by ordering him to print for

them the first pamphlet, or "book," of twenty-three pages, published in Worcester, entitled "Narrative | of the | Excursions and Ravages | of the | King's Troops | Under the Command of General Gage, | on the Nineteenth of April, 1775, | Together with the | Depositions Taken by Order of Congress, | To support the Truth of it. | Published by Authority. Massachusetts Bay, | Worcester, Printed by Isaiah Thomas, by order of the Provincial Congress."

On the reverse side of the title-page is the following notice:

In Provincial Congress, Watertown, May 22nd, 1775,

*Resolved*, That the following Narrative of the Excursion and ravages of the King's troops under the command of General Gage, on the 19th of April last, together with the Depositions taken by order of the Congress to support the truth of it, be sent to the press for publication. Attest,

SAMUEL FREEMAN, Sec'y.

This was a well-written and a well-printed pamphlet. The account by "An Eye Witness" appeared in the first number of the *Spy* printed in Worcester. Isaiah Thomas was both the author and the publisher. The first two pages made a vivid, convincing introduction to the later narratives and depositions:

NARRATIVE OF EXCURSION AND RAVAGES OF THE KING'S  
TROOPS

On the nineteenth day of April, one thousand, seven hundred and seventy-five, a day to be remembered by all Amer-

icans of the present generation, and which ought and doubtless will be handed down to ages yet unborn, in which the troops of Britain, unprovoked, shed the blood of sundry of the loyal American subjects of the British King in the field of Lexington.

Early in the morning of said day, a detachment of the forces under the command of General Gage, stationed at Boston, attacked a small party of the inhabitants of Lexington and some other towns adjacent, the detachment consisting of about nine hundred men, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Smith. The inhabitants of Lexington and the other towns were about one hundred, some with and some without fire arms, who had collected upon information that the detachment had secretly marched from Boston the preceding night, and landed at Phip's Farm in Cambridge, and were proceeding on their way with a brisk pace towards Concord (as the inhabitants supposed) to take or destroy a quantity of stores deposited there for the use of the colony; sundry peaceable inhabitants having the same night been taken, held by force, and otherwise abused on the road, by some officers of General Gage's army, which caused a just alarm to the people, and a suspicion that some fatal design was immediately to be put in execution against them.

This small party of the inhabitants so far from being disposed to commit hostilities against the troops of their sovereign that, unless attacked, were determined to be peaceable spectators of this extraordinary movement; immediately on the approach of Colonel Smith with the detachment under his command they dispersed. But the detachment, seeming to thirst for BLOOD, wantonly rushed on, and first began the hostile scene by firing on the small party in which they killed eight men on the spot and wounded several others before any guns were fired upon the troops by our men.

The Narrative continues to tell what happened at the bridge at Concord, where two were killed and others wounded "before the Provincials (roused with zeal for the liberties of their country, finding life and everything dear and valuable at stake) assumed their native valour and returned the fire and the engagement on both sides began." The narrator tells of the retreat towards Cambridge, during which the British troops committed violence and destroyed property, and the coming of another detachment under Earl Percy. The fighting lasted through the day with "many killed and wounded on both sides tho loss of British troops far exceeded that of Provincials." Then follows indignant narration of "the devastation on the way almost beyond description, plundering, burning, driving women in childbed to streets and killing old men in house, unarmed.... Such devastation would be a reproach to the perpetrators, even if committed by barbarous nations, how much more when done by Britons famed for humanity and tenderness: And all this because these colonies will not submit to the iron yoke of an arbitrary power."

This was written by the man whom the Reverend Mr. Chaplin called a Tory. The narrative by Mr. Thomas, undoubtedly more dramatic and graphic because of his strong patriotic bias, was in the main corroborated by the Depositions, taken down before Justices of the peace, by "(1) Solomon Brown, Jonathan Loring and Elijah Saunderson, to seeing & being sud-

denly surprized by nine persons on horse about ten P.M. April 18th; the men pointed pistols at their breasts, took horses' bridles & kept them until two A.M. & inquired about the magazine at Concord. (2) Thomas, Rice, and Willard in the house of Daniel Harrington & saw regulars (400) and 100 militia on the common and threatening. (3) Simon Winship testified to seeing the troops coming and the officer flourishing his sword, 'made a huzza' and gave word to *fire*."

Other Depositions were by John Parker (Captain at Lexington) who bore witness that the Provincials were not "to meddle" and that he ordered the militia "to disperse and not to fire" but the "regulars, rushing furiously, fired upon and killed eight of our party without receiving any provocation therefor from us." One of the most animated accounts was given by John Robbins who was in the front ranks. It has the exaggeration of a dramatist: Sometime before sunrise he saw on the green or common, "troops about a thousand, as I thought, at the distance of about sixty or seventy yards from us huzzaing, and on a quick pace towards us, with three officers in their front, on horseback, and on full gallop towards us, the foremost of which cried, 'throw down your arms, ye villains, ye rebels,' upon which said company dispersing, the foremost of the three officers ordered their men, saying, 'fire, by God, fire,' at which moment we received a very heavy and close fire from them, at which instant being wounded I fell, and several of our men were shot dead by me.



Captain Parker's men, I believe, had not then fired a gun, and further the deponent saith not." This excited narrator was so "maimed and wounded" that he could neither write his name nor make his mark but his story was given before William Read and Josiah Johnson, Justices of the Peace.

Among others who gave depositions about the Lexington or the Concord affray were Benjamin Tidd, Joseph Abbot of Lincoln, Nathaniel Milliken, Philip Russell, three Harringtons (Moses, Jr., Thomas and David), Isaac Hastings, John Munroe, William Munroe, 3rd, John Winship, John Hoar, Levi Mead, Micha Hager, William Draper, Thomas Fessenden, John Whitehead, William Hosmer, John Adams and Gregory Stone. At the Concord Bridge were about one hundred; when some of them saw their houses burning and turned to go, they were fired on by guns; some of the British troops tore up planks of the bridge. Dr. Timothy Minot, Jr., of Concord gave interesting experiences.

In answer to a charge made by "a paper having been printed in Boston, representing that one of the British troops killed at the bridge at Concord was scalped and the ears cut off from the head, supposed to be done to dishonour the Massachusetts people, and to make them appear to be savage and barbarous, the following deposition was taken that the truth may be known: 'We, the subscribers, of lawful age, testify and say that we buried the dead bodies of the King's troops that were

killed at the North Bridge in Concord, on the nineteenth day of April, 1775, where the action first began, and that neither of these persons were scalped, nor their ears cut off, as has been represented.' ” This testimony was given by Zachariah Brown and Thomas Davis, Jr. Others gave varied accounts of the day.

The deposition by Hannah Adams of Cambridge, wife of Deacon Joseph Adams, testified to the violence of “divers of the King’s troops,” who burst open her doors, broke into the room where she lay in bed, unable to walk because of a recent childbirth, and she continues:

One of said soldiers immediately opened my curtains with his bayonet fixed, pointing the same to my breast. I immediately cried out for the Lord’s sake do not kill me, he replied damn you; one that stood near said, we will not hurt the woman if she will go out of the house but we will surely burn it. I immediately arose, threw a blanket over me, went out and crawled into a cornhouse near the door, with my infant in my arms, where I remained untill they were gone, they immediately set the house on fire in which I had left five children and no other person, but the fire was happily extinguished, when the house was in the utmost danger of being utterly consumed.

*Immediately* seems to have been the favorite “word of the hour.”

The last accusation, made by Benjamin and Rachel Cooper, of Cambridge, was that troops of General Gage fired “more than 100 bullets into their house, then entered & 2 aged gentlemen there, unarmed, were immediately murdered by them, being stabbed through

in many places, their heads mauled, skulls broke, and their brains out on the floor and wall of the house and further saith not." As a contrast to these gruesome tales, the reader today may turn to *The British in Boston: Being the Diary of Lieut. John Barber of the King's Own Regiment, from Nov. 15, 1774 to May 31, 1776*, with notes by Elizabeth Ellery Dana.<sup>4</sup>

In spite of this important "Narrative of the Nineteenth of April," commissions from the provincial Congress for the Worcester printer did not come his way. One reason may have been the transfer to Watertown of the *Boston Gazette* by Benjamin Edes in April, soon after Thomas moved to Worcester. This fearless, but not rabid, newspaper was favored by the patriots. Incriminating letters by Governor Hutchinson to his predecessor, Bernard, were quoted and requests made for any "secret and confidential letters" of the Governor. The testimony of Isaiah Thomas to the honesty and industry of his fellow-printer shows few indications of personal jealousy: "He opened a printing-house in Watertown, where he continued the *Gazette*, and printed for the provincial Congress of Massachusetts. Here he found full employment, and his zeal in the cause of his country animated him to redoubled diligence." He adds, "The printing he executed at Watertown did not, indeed, do much credit to the *art*," but he declares that other work, done at that time, because of poor ink and other materials, "was not greatly superior."<sup>5</sup>

There is no rancor in the letter, found among the Thomas Papers, which Thomas wrote at this time, when he realized that he would get no more printing for the Congress and probably would not receive pay for the newspapers and postage which he had sent to them for many months. It is a detailed, sorry tale of his misfortunes, but the tone is tolerant and submissive for one with his proud spirit:

WORCESTER, October 2d, 1775

TO HON. DANIEL HOPKINS, MEMBER OF THE HON. HOUSE  
OF ASSEMBLY

SIR,

I have the honour of receiving two Letters from you which you sent by Order of the Hon. House, desiring me to send no more papers to them on the account of the Colony. In your last, Sir, you mention that it is thought highly improper to continue the papers if they were to be paid for but that it was possible you had been misinformed and that the Printer intended these papers as a Present, as you till of late supposed. I will, agreeable to your Request inform you of the true state of the matter and humbly submit it to the consideration.

A few days before the late memorable Battle of Lexington, I applied at Concord to a Number of the Hon. Delegates then sitting in Congress among whom was the Hon. President, to ask their opinion if it was not proper, as public matters then were, for me to remove my Printing-Office out of Boston, as I found the Liberty of the Press in that devoted Capitol daily declining and myself growing more and more obnoxious to the enemies of our once happy Constitution, and more particularly to our then *Military Masters* (some of whom had carried their Resentment so far as *Twice* to endeavour to assassinate me for no other reason, as I humbly conceive than

doing the little in my power, in the way of my Profession towards supporting the Rights and Privileges of my Countrymen.)

The Hon. Gentlemen informed me that it was highly requisite I should immediately remove myself and printing materials out of Boston, as in a few days it might be too late. I accordingly went away as soon as could be, packed up my Press and Types and in the dead of night *stole* them out of town. Two nights after this, the Troops went to Lexington and the next morning Boston was entirely shut up. I escaped myself the day of the battle and left many things, my tools excepted, behind me. Some of the Delegates of the Hon. Congress in a day or two after desired me to get my Press ready for Printing, as they had several things to be done. I informed them of my unfortunate circumstances at that time—fleeing from Boston without any money to purchase stock (I had just laboured through another year with my paper and it being the custom for subscribers to pay yearly all that I should have *at that time have possessed* was then and *is now*, in the hands of my numerous Subscribers, now scattered through the Continent, to the amount of above Three Thousand Dollars).

The Hon. Committee of Supplies were so kind as to order me paper as a present supply, as something was due to me from the Province, and I was requested immediately to continue the publication of the Massachusetts Spy. In a few days after this, I was ordered with my tools to Concord, thither I directly went myself but before my tools could possibly arrive, the Congress had adjourned to Watertown, and it was told me by several of that Hon. body, that it was best for me to continue for the present at Worcester. As none of the Boston Printers then published a paper or were like to do it, myself excepted, I was desired by many gentlemen, both in the Congress, the different Committees, and the army to forward mine to them; and

several, who I imagined knew my circumstances, told me I should send a number to the Congress and to the headquarters. I immediately established a Post to the army to bring me intelligence and carry my papers to the Hon. Congress and the army. As matters were then in much disorder, together with my residing at such a distance added to the desire I ever have had of doing my Country all the *service in my power*, I did what my Superiors bade, without ever inquiring, Who was to *reward me*? And as it was thought I could serve my Country best in the capacity of a Printer, I went on publishing my Paper, although at that time I had not 200 subscribers exclusive of what I sent to the Hon. Congress, the Committees and Army.

I never meant to make any *great profit* by the Papers I have sent, and I have only charged *one Penny* for each paper, which is hardly what it cost me for the Stock and Labour, exclusive of any *emolument*. If the Hon. House, after this Detail (for the length of which I humbly crave your forgiveness, as I thought it best to be particular) should think I was too *forward*, and do not merit any pay, either for the papers or any part of the Postage, I shall content myself with their determination.

Your Candour, Sir, will excuse the inaccuracies of this Letter, wrote in haste, as I have just an opportunity of transmitting it to yourself. I have the honour to be,

Your oblig'd, humble Servant,

ISA. THOMAS

P.S. I have sent weekly since my printing in this place, 100 papers to the Hon. Congress while they sat, and afterwards the same number to the Hon. House, 80 to the Headquarters in Cambridge, 60 to the Headquarters in Roxbury, 16 to the Hon. Council, 16 to the Committee of Supplies, and 16 to the Committee of Safety. The whole 288 papers, weekly, for which I have only charged 6*d* per week, prepaid. 288 papers for twenty weeks and 6*d* per week for postage.

Isaiah Thomas delighted in three forms of self-expression—writing voluminous letters, of which this is a sample, making frequent wills, and having his portrait painted. The two latter forms of self-indulgence were delayed until years of greater prosperity; he was now at the depth of his depression. His domestic tragedy will be told in the next chapter. He had not yet made many friends in Worcester but he had some enemies. On March 1, 1776, he announced the discontinuance of his *Spy* as a weekly, for a month; he offered, gratis, "a handbill with the news" to subscribers. He made urgent appeals for payment by "all indebted to him," stressing that he "had lost on being drove from Boston, everything he possessed on earth, except his Life and his Types."

The direct cause of his financial collapse was the action of some hard-boiled creditor of the time, probably some money-lender. In the *Spy*, April 12, 1776, Thomas wrote: "The printer of this paper is sorry that the publication has been deferred so long, he took every step in *his power* to prevent it, but could not possibly settle his affairs sooner than he did; it was his misfortune to fall into the hands of a mortal, whose Pharaoh-like heart was bent on Cruelty and Oppression, and callous to every feeling of benevolence which characterizes MAN—but he was not an American."

On Friday, May 24, 1776, he issued a peremptory notice: "Those persons who have lately dropped this paper, are requested to call and settle with the printer."

He had been obliged to increase the price from six shillings, six pence to eight shillings. The fight had been heroic and the retreat, for a time, was honorable as well as inevitable. The last number of the *Spy*, with the name of "I. Thomas," as publisher, in 1776, had been issued. On June 21st the names of William Stearns and Daniel Bigelow appeared as its printers.

Among the valuable letters, written by Isaiah Thomas, which are now at the New York Historical Society, is one which was written in 1785 from Worcester. It is an illuminating aftermath of what this patriot-printer had hoped from government support for his paper, and it gives his personal experiences during these years of seeming defeat. The letter is given here in full, by permission of the Society:

WORCESTER, Sept. 23d, 1785.

TO THOMAS IVES, Boston.

SIR,

Yesterday I had the honour to receive a Letter from you, informing me that you had a note of mine in your possession bearing Date June, 1775, on account of the State & that unless it was discharged by the first of Nov next that you would, in compliance with an order of the Legislature, be compelled to put it in print. This information gave me surprise being conscious that I do not owe the State for one thing. I gave the late Mr. Gardner, Treasurer, about the time above mentioned, an obligation in consequence of a quantity of paper received of the sort to do work for them. A considerable sum of money was then due to me from Government.

In the winter following I carried in my account—got an order on the Treasurer for the money who, after deducting



out the amount of the note, paid me the balance. The reason of my not taking up the note at that time was that Mr. Treasurer could not attend to it—his office being crowded with people—but he knew the exact sum of the note by means of a small memorandum book whereon it was minuted and otherwise the same sum which was paid Mr. Vose, a paper maker.

I had been waiting several days at Watertown for no other business than to settle with the government and my business demanded my presence above 100 miles distant immediately. Mr. G. told me that I might rely on my having the note or obligation at any time, when he had more leisure, he would look it up. It was some months after before I again waited on him—he was then as full of business as before—he promised “to look it up”—that was his expression, and put it among his own private papers, handy in his pocket Book so that he could easily get it if I called again. In short, I soon after removed out of the State and was absent almost two years; however I called on him several times after, and he had some excuse; length of time finally made it an old affair and I thought less of it. Not to tire your patience any longer, Sir, I would just inform you that I never got it from him—I must, therefore, Sir, beg your forbearance until I can have opportunity to seek redress.

If you will be so very obliging as to point out the mode I should esteem myself under great obligation. To pay it at this time, would be exceedingly hard.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your very humble S<sup>vt</sup>

ISAIAH THOMAS.

This letter is a commentary upon methods of conducting public business at that time. What the sequel of this affair may have been has not been revealed by any letter or printed material that I have found. When

it was written, in 1785, Isaiah Thomas had passed through a decade of intense struggle to maintain his property and secure a livelihood for himself and his family. He had *won* by his indomitable will and his inventive methods of securing subscribers to his publications. By 1785, he was a respected and influential citizen of Worcester. He had business contacts with other printers in Massachusetts and elsewhere. He was making frequent visits to Boston where his journals and books, printed in Worcester, were sold in good quantities. His son remained with him, but his daughter, Mary Ann (generally written Marianne) was in the household of the older brother of Isaiah, Joshua Thomas, in Arlington, where she lived until her marriage.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ECONOMIC AND DOMESTIC TRIALS

ALTHOUGH Isaiah Thomas had severed his actual connection with the *Massachusetts Spy* as its printer in June, 1776, he spent considerable time in the town, trying to collect his over-due debts from subscribers. In the issue for July 22, 1776, he reiterates his pleading for justice. Speaking for this printer who seeks redress, he says:

He has made several journeys to Worcester on purpose to receive his just due but, to his surprise found the old proverb verified, "*Out of sight, out of mind.*" He *once more* earnestly begs that those who are indebted to him for News Papers, &c (if it be but *two-pence*) would immediately pay their respective ballances to Mr. *Daniel Bigelow*, jun. one of the publishers of this paper, as so many small sums when collected together will be of essential service, and the want of which will be of great detriment to

ISAIAH THOMAS.

The two men who had taken a lease of the *Spy* for two years had more enthusiasm than experience in the "art of printing." They changed the day of publication to Wednesday. They adopted a new motto, "Undaunted by Tyrants, we will die or be free." William Stearns, the elder of the two men, was a native of Lunenburg and a graduate of Harvard College, in the class of

1770. He had studied divinity for a year before he joined in this newspaper experiment. Later he practised law and was a true friend to Thomas; he died, still in young manhood, in 1784.

It was probably due to the association of his kinsman, Captain Timothy Bigelow (later to be known always as Colonel) that Daniel Bigelow, Jr., joined William Stearns in this temporary effort to keep the *Spy* alive for Isaiah Thomas. This young man had graduated from Harvard the previous year, 1775. He was the more active of the partners in his journalistic venture. Later he studied law with success and gained honor in his profession and, also, as a member of the General Court.

On another day Isaiah Thomas was in Worcester, July 14, 1776. To his keen observation and quick action the inhabitants were indebted for the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence in Massachusetts. As Thomas was passing through the main street of the town, he espied a horseman hurrying through on his way to Cambridge with the precious document. The printer surmised what this rider's mission might be, stopped him and inquired, with the result that, while the messenger "was entertained" for a brief period of rest, Thomas summoned all the people whom he could find, outside the meeting-house on the Common, mounted to the porch on the second story of the building, and here read the Declaration. He was remembered then as having "a ruddy face and a strong voice."

The *Massachusetts Spy* of July 24, 1776, contained a very restrained account of the exciting event and the celebration which followed this reading. The latter was on a Saturday and the celebration was the following Monday: when

a number of patriotic gentlemen of this town, animated with a love of their country, and to show their approbation of the measures lately taken by the Grand Council of America, assembled on the green, near the liberty pole, where, after having displayed the colours of the thirteen confederate colonies of America, the bells were set ringing and the drums a beating: After which, the Declaration of Independence of the United States was read to a large and respectable Body, among whom were the Selectmen and committee of correspondence, assembled on the occasion, who testified their approbation by repeated huzzas, firing of musketry and cannon, bonfires and other demonstration of joy: When the arms of that tyrant in Britain, George the III of execrable memory, which in former times decorated, but of late disgraced the Court House in this town, were committed to the flames and consumed to ashes; after which, a select company of the sons of freedom, repaired to the tavern lately known by the sign of the King's Arms, which odious signature of despotism was taken down by order of the people, which was cheerfully complied with by the innkeeper, where the following toasts were drank; and the evening spent with joy, on the commencement of the happy era.

The list of toasts that were "drank" follows, an interesting commentary on history of that period with some amusing side-lights:

1. Prosperity and perpetuity to the United States of America.
2. The president of the Grand Council of America.
3. The Grand Council of America.
4. His excellency George Washington.
5. All the Generals in the American Army.
6. Commodore Hopkins.
7. The officers and soldiers of the American Army.
8. The officers and seamen in the American Navy.
9. The patriots of America.
10. Every friend of America.
11. George rejected and liberty protected.
12. Success to the American arms.
13. Sore eyes to all tories and a chestnut burr for an eye stone.
14. Perpetual itching without the benefit of scratching, to the enemies of America.
15. The Council and Representatives of the State of Massachusetts Bay.
16. The officers and soldiers in the Massachusetts service.
17. The memory of the brave General Warren.
18. The memory of the magnanimous General Montgomery.
19. Speedy redemption to all the officers and soldiers who are now prisoners of war among our enemies.
20. The State of Massachusetts Bay.
21. The town of Boston.
22. The selectmen and committees of correspondence for the town of Worcester.
23. May the enemies of America be laid at her feet.
24. May the freedom and independency of America endure, till the sun grows dim with age, and this earth returns to chaos.

There must have been remarkable ability to "carry their liquor," on the part of these celebrants, for the account ends with the words, "The greatest decency and good order was observed, and at a suitable time each man returned to his respective home."

That Isaiah Thomas was present at this gala occasion—that, probably, he wrote the account for the *Spy*—may be easily surmised. It is certain that he was in Worcester the following day when his young apprentice, Benjamin Russell, as cited in the previous chapter, found himself, with other youths who had been drinking too much punch, enlisted in the army from which illegal enrollment he was rescued by Thomas. When the Honorable Benjamin Russell was Senator and Councilor, as well as editor of *Columbian Centinel* he often recalled this escapade. While much must be conjectural regarding the whereabouts of Isaiah Thomas during the two years of his absence from Worcester, one episode of that interim has a few definite records—namely, his futile attempt to start a newspaper in Salem. He must have taken the "half" of his types, left in Boston when his press and tools and some types were transported to Worcester secretly, on the night of April 16th, and moved these to Salem, in the late summer of 1776. Proof of this is found in the following advertisement, dated Salem, August 28th, of that year:<sup>1</sup>

ISAIAH THOMAS (Late Printer and Publisher of the well known Massachusetts *Spy* of Boston) Begs leave to inform the *Public* that, at the Request of Several Gentlemen in the

County of Essex, he has removed his Printing Office to Salem, and intends publishing a News-Paper as soon as a sufficient Number of *Subscribers* appear to support it, which it is supposed will be in about four weeks from the date hereof.

Subscriptions for the News-Paper on the same terms as the Boston Papers, are now received by Mr. *M. Williams*, Bookseller, and in a few days will be received by *I. Thomas*, at the Printing Office which will be kept in the Store, lately occupied by Mr. John Gooll, in the Main-Street, fronting the Road leading to Marblehead.

A month passed—a time of tense emotion for Thomas—and another announcement appeared in the same journal which had now a new title, the *Independent Chronicle*, October 3, 1776:

SALEM, October 2, 1776.

*To the Public,*

THOSE GENTLEMEN AND LADIES who incline to encourage the publishing a News Paper, in the town of Salem, are requested to send in their names with all convenient speed; No Money to be paid until the delivery of the first number. The price will be Eight Shillings, per annum, exclusive of postage, Two Shillings to be paid on the delivery of the first number, and the Two Shillings more at the expiration of each quarter. Those who do not incline to advance any money beforehand may, if they send in their names and take them weekly, be supplied at two Pence per week.

The Printer is now waiting only for the names of a sufficient number of Subscribers. Subscriptions are now received by Isaiah Thomas, at his printing-office in the main street, fronting the road leading to Marblehead. Also, by Mr. *M. Williams*, Bookseller, in the main-street.



How much longer the printer "waited for the names of a sufficient number of Subscribers" for his proposed newspaper, cannot be reported. With vivid memories of this year of "patient waiting," in his later manhood, when he was known as an astute business man, he said that "three writs of attachment were served upon his press and types in a single evening."<sup>2</sup> Another statement of this sequel is that "many obstacles arising, he sold his press and types and gave up the plan."<sup>3</sup>

Research has shown why Isaiah Thomas, who even as a young man was considered able in business enterprises, attempted this newspaper publication at Salem. For seven years before the beginning of hostilities at Lexington there had been successfully published, at Salem, the *Essex Gazette*. The first number was dated August 2, 1768. The printer was Samuel Hall, who gave to the weekly sheet a fitting emblem, that of a *fish*, above the device of the bird with extended wings; the fish was "emblematical of the codfishery, formerly the principal dependence of the county of Essex, of which Salem is the shire town."<sup>4</sup> Two aborigines, each with a tomahawk, held up these insignia.

Ebenezer Hall shared with Samuel the business until 1775 when he died. The first printer then removed his press and paper to Cambridge, at the suggestion, perhaps, of the Congress; after the evacuation of Boston, the next year, the office was in that city and there the paper was published as the *New England Chronicle*, without the words *Essex Gazette*. By June 1776, the

rights had been sold by Samuel Hall to Nathaniel Willis and Edward E. Powers and the title changed again to the *Independent Chronicle*.<sup>5</sup> This correction explains the seeming confusion regarding the advertisement of Thomas' prospective newspaper.

There would seem to have been little chance for this newspaper, which was visioned by Thomas in Salem; he should have been warned by the failure of another venture which started in June 18, 1776, and had lasted only a few weeks. This was the *American Gazette; or The Constitutional Journal*, a crown sheet, folio, printed by Ezekiel Russell and John Rogers. Ezekiel Russell, who had been a partner of Daniel Fowle in Portsmouth, when Thomas stopped there on his way from Halifax, had a printing-shop in Salem where he issued ballads and small books, in Ruck Street. Although the newspaper which Rogers edited for him during the summer of 1776 had failed to secure encouragement, there was a demand, on the part of many people of the town, for *another* journal and printing-house to take the place of that transferred by the Halls, first to Cambridge and later to Boston. In January, 1781, Mary Crouch, the widow of Charles Crouch of Charleston, South Carolina (where she had helped her husband in his newspaper printing) came to Salem and started there the *Salem Gazette and General Advertiser*. It struggled along for nine months when it was abandoned. Samuel Hall returned from Boston to publish in Salem, in 1781, the *Salem Gazette*. This grew and prospered under

successive managers. In 1857, its editor recorded that of the forty-nine papers, started after this *Salem Gazette*, forty-six had ended in bankruptcy.<sup>6</sup>

Where Isaiah Thomas passed most of his days for the next year, is a matter largely of conjecture. He made frequent visits to Worcester, both to collect his overdue "balances" and to assist the printers of the *Massachusetts Spy* in the mechanical work on the press, for which they were so poorly equipped. It is probable that he was there in 1776 when, according to local tradition and memories of Benjamin Russell (who remained as apprentice with Bigelow and Stearns) Benjamin Franklin, passing through Worcester, made some repairs upon the press and gave a friendly notice to the young workman. It is likely that Thomas was often in Watertown where he had kindly relations with Benjamin Edes, the printer there of the *Boston Gazette* and other work for the state committees.

There was another place associated with these dim years in the life of Thomas, namely, Londonderry, New Hampshire. Why he chose *this* town as a home for his wife and children, on a farm, and there opened a book-store for the sale of his newspapers and other publications, cannot be answered here. It has been suggested in an earlier chapter that in Nova Scotia, especially around Halifax, he may have met farmers from this vicinity who had gone north. Proof of his direct contact with Londonderry, as a land-owner, is found in copies of the *Spy*; more specific knowledge has come

from research at Exeter, in the Court House Registry of Deeds. By the usual landmarks of "sticks and stones" or a "small pine tree," we have located the boundaries, in general, of his farm and that of his brother, Joshua, which was near by.

To Isaiah Thomas, in February 19, 1776, was sold by John Cate, yeoman of Londonderry, and his wife, "for and in consideration of the sum of eighty-five pounds Lawful Money" this farm of forty acres "more or less." This same "certain tract of land" was sold by Isaiah Thomas to Stephen March of Hampstead for the sum of seven hundred pounds lawful money on the eighth day of April, 1779. The large increase in pounds was due to the depreciation of paper money from 1776 to 1779. It is significant, also, that while the wife of Joshua Thomas, Mary, and other women signed their names on deeds, "in token of surrender of rights of dowry," there was no signature of Mary Dill Thomas. Joshua Thomas was the postrider for the *Spy*, who "transacted business with accuracy and despatch," passing every Wednesday from Worcester through the towns of Lancaster, Lunenburg, Pepperell, Dunstable, Hollis to Londonderry and on to Chester and Windham.

In copies of the *Spy*, during these years, were advertisements of the publications sold "at the Printing-House in Worcester and at the house of I. Thomas in Londonderry." Broad-sides and Almanacks were staple attractions. When the farm was offered for sale, in 1779, it was described in the *Spy*, January 21, 1779:

A SMALL FARM containing about 42 acres, lying in Londonderry, about the centre of the town, on the great Road from Exeter to Connecticut, well-situated for a Tavern-keeper, or a Tradesman: A good House with Barn thereon, The whole to be sold on reasonable terms, For further particulars enquire at the Printing Office in Worcester, or in Londonderry at the house of

ISAIAH THOMAS.

He sold this farm and removed some equipment to Worcester, for he was advertising (August 19, 1779) "A Light Ox Cart which would answer well on a small farm" and, in the same issue, "A Riding Chair, in good order, with a Harness compleat."

To Londonderry, during these years from 1776 to 1779, Isaiah Thomas must have gone frequently yet he seems to have left no impressions upon the historians of the town nor of any of the genealogists, who "are rich in local traditions." His children were too young to have been enrolled in any school or church records—the daughter was four years old and the son, Isaiah, Junior, only two. The wife was in disgrace for, at that time, a wife against whom a libel for divorce was being pressed, on the ground of her infidelity, would be regarded with stern disfavor by the New England housewives and neighbors of both sexes. This domestic condition may not have been known generally in Londonderry but it is likely that village gossip, then as now, made rapid pace.

Among the Thomas Papers<sup>7</sup> at the American Antiquarian Society is a perfect copy, in black ink and very

fine penmanship, of "The Libel, May 27, 1777, of Isaiah Thomas of Boston in the County of Suffolk, Printer, against his wife, Mary Thomas." I have consulted the original of this libel in the Court House in Boston and find the copy is without a flaw. In legal terms:

the Libellant begs leave before your Honors hereby to charge the said Mary Thomas with having been guilty of the Crime of Adultery with one Major Thompson, since their inter-marriage. May it please your Honors that on the twenty-fifth day of December A.D. 1769, the libellant was lawfully joined in marriage with one Mary Dill, his present wife from which time till the present he has strictly observed on his part the Marriage Contract & during the Continuance of Conjugal Harmony he was blessed with three Children by her—but to his great Mortification he at last found that his said wife was not only destitute of that affection and regard for him which is necessary to render a State of Matrimony easy & happy but that she has not even confidence in him without which by a mind not strictly virtuous the Marriage Covenant could not be preserved inviolate.

That petulance of Temper & unhappiness of Disposition which she daily exercised to the disturbance of domestic Peace added to the many indecencies and unbecoming familiarities which it was usual for her to practice, the proponent endeavour'd to reclaim her from by mild & dispassionate Council.

Soon after his Marriage to his Astonishment he found that his wife had had a bastard sone (sic) years before & that she had been prostituted to the purposes of more than one: This the proponent, tho' ignorant at the time of his marriage, would most willingly have sealed in Oblivion for ever but such has been the Conduct of this said wife of late, that nothing but

an Appeal to the Justices of the Hon<sup>abl</sup> Court can repair the flagrant Injuries the proponent hath suffer'd or ease the disturbed State of his Mind. He therefore prays that the Bonds of Marriage between him and the said Mary may be dissolved and for Cause of such Divorce he here sets down & alleges the Articles following Vizt":

The proponent doth alledge that since his marriage aforesaid at divers times in the month of February, Anno Domini, 1775, the said Mary hath been surpriz'd in such familiarities with one Major Thompson as give the strongest Reasons to suspect that she was guilty of Adultery with the said Thompson.

Detailed mention follows of the dates and occasions when, by proof, she was unfaithful: "On the 23rd day of February at Newburyport—when she insisted upon going in spite of her husband's appeals, saying she 'would go if it was to her *Eternal Ruin*.'" Later dates, when she was found in unquestioned "familiarities," at Charlestown, Newbury, Lynn, Portsmouth and Grantland are cited, with mention of the owners of the houses. Some of the "conversations which plainly indicated the wickedness of their hearts" are enumerated. The libel says, in its record, that his wife has "confessed."

The sequel of this appeal for divorce was the decree: "The Major Part of the Council of the State of Massachusetts Bay in New England vote that the Bonds of Marriage between the said Isaiah Thomas and Mary Thomas be and they are hereby dissolved, May 27th, 1777." The signatures upon this "vote" and decree included Hon. Francis Dana, Esq., Hon. James Powell, Caleb Cushing, Thomas Cushing, Benj. Greenleaf,

Hon. Moses Hill, William Phillips, Benj. Austin, Benj. White, Daniel Davis, Esq.

Divorces were few in these earlier days of Massachusetts Bay courts. This libel, with its detailed information about the infidelities of a wife and mother, would necessarily be the subject of much gossip if it were known. The fact that the "proponent" and husband was one of the most conspicuous patriots in Boston and editor and publisher of the most rabid anti-British newspaper in New England would, naturally, add more interest to the scandal, which must have been discussed in the homes of both his friends and his enemies. Search, however, fails to find any newspaper references to this libel or the divorce. This may have been due to professional "etiquette" at that time; more likely it was because such domestic affairs were seldom mentioned in the press of the period, unless they had some political import. Isaiah Thomas had been nearly two years in gathering proof of his wife's unfaithfulness and in presenting this appeal to the Court, waiting for many months for their decree. This tragic experience coincided with his troubles in securing pay for his subscriptions to the *Spy*, both in Worcester and in Boston, and the financial crisis which compelled him to lease his press in Worcester and hide his whereabouts, except from a few friends, for the next two years.

Who was the "one Major Thompson," the co-respondent cited in the libel? It is strange that no more definite name was given, or required by the Court.



The general supposition is that he was an English officer but no assertion can be made. Among the Sons of Liberty "who celebrated at a certain tavern in Dorchester," April 14, 1769, was a Major James Thompson but he has not been listed as a suspect in this adultery of 1775.<sup>8</sup>

How long the wife and children of Isaiah Thomas remained in Londonderry is not known. This quiet, rural community and the farm which he owned there, with its forty-two acres of land, "consisting of Plowing, Mowing, and Pasturing, with a good House and Barn thereon," was an excellent "retreat" for the unstable, petulant Mary Dill Thomas. How contented she may have been, or whether she "mended her ways" under such mild discipline, is another matter for conjecture. It is probable that her husband sent her back to her birthplace, Bermuda, or to some relatives in the South. She was living when he made his will, November 7, 1797, for he left to "Mary Dill Thomas a legacy of \$500, to be lodged in the hands of my son, and appropriated to her use at his discretion."

Until Isaiah Thomas could locate permanently, with a home, he was obliged to leave his two children with relatives. Mary Ann, as has been stated, became a member of the household of her uncle, Joshua Thomas, during her maidenhood. The son may have been in the same family for two years, after the divorce was granted, or with some other relative. By October 22, 1778, Isaiah Thomas had decided that he would return to Worcester and the *Spy*, and was advertising:

"Wanted, to purchase, ten or twenty acres of *Land*, with a convenient House and barn thereon, in or near Worcester. Enquire of Isaiah Thomas." Soon after this his brother, Joshua, was dating his "Post Boy" communications in the *Spy* from Lancaster, where there was a Thomas farm for many years, on which Joshua lived in his later years and where he died.

A chance discovery of another Advertisement in the *Spy*, April 23, 1778, leads to interesting speculations about Isaiah Thomas's contacts with his mother during these years. The announcement reads:

#### ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS REWARD

Lost Yesterday afternoon between Cambridge Common and Prospect Hill, about *One Hundred and Seventy-Five pounds* in Paper Money. Amongst the bills were thirty pounds of State money now called in; Ten Thirty Dollar bills, and the remainder of the bills under eight, excepting one, all Continental; Whoever has found the same and will leave it with Mr. Edes, Printer in Boston, or send it to the Printing-Office in Worcester, shall have the above reward with the grateful thanks of

ISAIAH THOMAS.

N.B. The Money was all tied up together, and wrapped in an old News Paper. Boston, March 31, 1778.

If the reader of this book is a "Recollecting Sir," as Thomas called his rival printer in 1771, he may remember that Mrs. Fidelity Thomas Blackman, the mother of Isaiah, had bought what he called "an estate," in West Cambridge, consisting of an acre and a quarter

of land, with the house and barn. She bought this in 1769 and sold it at a genuine loss (because of depreciated value of money) but a seeming "bargain," in September, 1778. In her home, during these troublous years for him in financial and domestic affairs, her son, Isaiah, may have found welcome and help.

We do not know whether he ever recovered his lost money but there are marked evidences that he was regaining courage to make another venture at publishing the *Spy* in Worcester. In truth, he was compelled to make this effort or he would see his cherished newspaper in a state of dissolution. The war years were causing all kinds of problems for Daniel Bigelow and William Stearns, who had taken the lease from Thomas. For a year they conducted the paper at a loss, with reiterated requests for payments of subscriptions, and then Mr. Stearns decided to return to the practice of law and young Mr. Bigelow went with him into that profession. Apparently, they applied their motto, "Undaunted by Tyrants, we will die or be free," and chose freedom to death. They leased the paper and equipment to Anthony Haswell who had been trained as a printer but had neither capital nor influence to succeed in Worcester.

Another succession of appeals for payments of subscriptions, for advertisements, and other "support" brought limited response. He was obliged to increase the price of subscription. The copies of the *Spy* were uneven in size, often only half sheets with rough paper and

blurred ink. Its appearance must have been a sore trial to its original publisher and it is not strange that, scores of years afterwards, when he was writing his *History of Printing*, he should explode in these words:<sup>9</sup>

"Owing to unskillful workmen, bad ink, wretched paper and worn down types, the *Spy* appeared in a miserable déshabillé during the two years for which it had been leased, and for two years after."

During 1777, the paper varied in size and quality; often some of the items were printed on the side or margin of the page, in horizontal form. Early in 1778, the publisher, Mr. Haswell,<sup>10</sup> stated conditions in a frank ultimatum:

To the Supporters of the Printing Business in the town and county of Worcester: KIND PATRONS:

The utility of a Printing Press in this large county is so well known to you that the loss of it especially at this time (when we are engaged in a war, the consequences of which is of the utmost importance to every individual who wishes well to our Zion, and is ready to give that assistance which an injured, bleeding country demands) would be more felt than at any other; although at no time would those who are sensible of its advantages choose to part with it.

There is much more of this involved explanation before the publisher reaches his purpose—to assure the "Kind Patrons" that he *must* have payments from them and that he urges "advance for half a year."

It must have been a relief to the Kind Patrons, as it is to the researchers in these files of old newspapers, to

come upon the clearly-phrased and entertaining statement in the issue of June 25, 1778:

ISALAH THOMAS, Printer, the original Proprietor and Publisher of this Paper begs leave to inform those Gentlemen and Ladies, who were his former customers that he again carries on the Printing Business in this town, and requests a renewal of their favours.

Those who have heretofore furnished his Press with productions for the benefit and amusement of his readers, he entreats would renew their Correspondence and shall esteem himself happy in receiving favours of the same kind from the Learned, the Witty, and the Curious, of both sexes, throughout the Continent.

With this issue appeared the name, *Thomas's Massachusetts Spy*, at the top of the first page and a new motto: <sup>11</sup> "*Unanimity at Home, and Bravery and Perseverance in the Field, will Secure the Independence of America.*"

There was more "Intelligence" from the army and from various places in the country; the tone of the newspaper became more alive and readable. These "Contributions," or as he had formerly called them "Lucubrations," began to come in slowly; often they seem more curious than witty to readers of today. It was announced, by Anthony Haswell, that he would continue some of the printing business but within a month (July 23, 1778) this former publisher is informing, with regret, his patrons that, "having met with a disappointment, in regard to purchasing the Printing materials, he is thereby rendered unable to fulfil many

contracts he had made and is greatly necessitated for money to settle with his paper maker," so he asks for "immediate settlement of accounts."

Advertisements came slowly but they were on the increase by the summer and fall of 1778. Joseph Trumbull announced the opening of his new store, with which Thomas was soon to be affiliated, "a little northwest of the Goal [sic] in Worcester for the sale of New England Rum and Women's Shoes of various colors." Another entertaining, unique advertisement in this number, by the Selectmen of Worcester, warns all who have had the Small Pox and are not "sufficiently *Cleansed*," to stay away from the "large concourse of people" who will assemble to witness the execution of three murderers. Should there be any spread of the dread disease of smallpox, due to such a gathering, the Selectmen express their fear that an event, which was intended as "a moral lesson," may become disaster to the town.

One of the customs of Old England which was retained long in New England was the public hangings and the crowds that gathered to witness these. The place of execution would be crowded hours before the event. Enterprising printers, in both countries, took advantage of such opportunities to sell broadsides, ballads and poems that contained the "moral lessons" and could be kept as souvenirs. Isaiah Thomas was one of the alert printers who lost no chance for such sales. In July (9th and 16th) he advertised the broadside which he

had printed—to be sold in Worcester and “at the house of I. Thomas in Londonderry—The dying declaration of James Buchanan, William Brooks and Ezra Ross” and A Poem on this spectacular event which gives side-lights upon the strange melodramatic literature of that day. A similar broadside, in 1786 (August 17th) was sold at the execution of John Green “for the Atrocious Crime of Burglary.”<sup>12</sup> For him a fellow-prisoner wrote the “Poem,” beginning and ending with the lines:

Let all the people of the globe  
Be on their guard, and see  
That they do shune the vicious road  
That's trodden been by me.  
My wicked conduct has been such,  
It's brought me to distress;  
As often times I've suffered much  
By my own wickedness.

May the old *Tempter* soon be bound  
And shut up in his den,  
And peace and honesty abound  
Among the sons of men.

We may smile with ironic mirth at these relics of a morbid curiosity of the 1770's but, with memory fresh of the “spectacle and vaudeville,” as newspapers called it, at the trial of the Lindbergh case, in 1935, with the mob of people who crowded thither, we cannot well assume an air of superiority.

The struggle for existence of the *Spy* continued to its

final victory. It was necessary for Thomas to ask again and again for payments, to beg for willingness on the part of some subscribers to pay in advance for a week, "nine pence each paper," which meant for a week to each individual. By September 3, 1778, he was advertising for "a stout, lively Lad who can read and write well," as an Apprentice. More encouragement, however, was necessary to justify the printer in his strong desire to make Worcester his home and headquarters for printing. As his predecessor, Anthony Haswell, had done, so Isaiah Thomas wrote an Ultimatum with more effective results: <sup>13</sup>

ISAIAH THOMAS, the Printer and Publisher of this Paper, hereby informs the good People of the County of Worcester that as very small encouragement has been given for some time past to the Press in *this* town, he had serious thoughts of removing the Printing Office out of the county. Many gentlemen in this and the adjacent towns who are public spirited and well know the many and great advantages from the Press have requested his stay here for a longer time, and have promised him their influence to promote the Printing Business. In compliance with the request of these Gentlemen, and being unwilling to remove the Press if supported, the Printer has continued to tarry for a few months longer, and should he meet with that encouragement, which may reasonably be expected in so large and populous a county, he will continue the business here, and still use his utmost endeavours to give satisfaction to all who are, or may be, customers to the Massachusetts Spy, or favour him with commands in any branch of printing.

Printing-Office, Worcester, March 17th, 1779.



In a brief time he was receiving more Contributions and Advertisements. There was still a shortage of Rags for paper and the "fair Daughters of Liberty" were often urged to show their patriotism by furnishing "clean linen" and other materials. One example of patriotic expression by "the Fair Daughters" was chronicled in effusive tribute:<sup>14</sup>

*She layeth her hands to the Spindle and her hands hold the distaff. Prov. 31:10.*

Correspondent with the Spirit of this sacred passage, the young ladies in the first parish of Shrewsbury, have generously spun for Mrs. Sumner, Consort of their Reverend pastor, 178 Skanes of linen and tow yarn, as an expression of their industry and generosity; an example worthy of imitation at this day.

Sometime during the spring or summer of 1780, Isaiah Thomas was drafted for service. His apprentice, Benjamin Russell, always devoted to his "master" and eager for adventure himself, volunteered to go in the place of the printer and the offer was accepted. He served for six months and was "honorably discharged." He joined the army at West Point. He was one of the guard that attended Major André and was present at his execution, a memory retold in his letters.

The two years from 1778, when Thomas returned to his press and paper, to 1780, when he found himself beginning to *reap* a few harvests, as well as *sow* many seeds of venture and industry, were epochal in his life. The indomitable pluck of the man and his initiative were evident in many ways. He faced a period of great

depression, and prices that were almost prohibitive because of the fluctuating, depreciated paper money. An idea of some of the prices current is given in a letter from Mrs. Timothy Bigelow to her husband, dated February 26, 1780:

The common price (of wood) is *fifty dollars*, and it has been sold for *fifty six dollars* the load. The money you sent me was very acceptable, for I was in debt for Andrew's pair of shoes, *forty dollars*; and also for mending in the family, which made the account almost *seventy dollars*. I paid the servant *fifty eight dollars*, for what money he had expended on the road (in a journey of about 60 miles). A bushel of malt now sells for *thirty dollars*, and a pound of hops for *six dollars*.

In spite of such depressing conditions, which might well have caused him despair, Isaiah Thomas rallied his determination to overcome obstacles. He established post-riders for his paper in several directions. In 1775, when he first printed the newspaper in Worcester, and was made postmaster, November 15th, he had sent a post-rider to Cambridge and Salem, with papers and packages; he left Worcester each Wednesday at noon and arrived at Cambridge, "by hard travelling," the next forenoon, and at Salem that night. On Wednesdays, also, a post started for Providence and Newport and returned on Saturdays. More post-riders, in 1778, included the towns of Londonderry, Chester, Windham, Keene, Walpole in New Hampshire, and Brookfield, Springfield and Fitchburg in Massachusetts. Some of the papers were carried by Nathaniel Maccarty, the

son of the Worcester minister. The youth was, for a time, an apprentice to Isaiah Thomas.

In the columns of the *Spy*—the best possible means for “promotion”—the first regular stage-coaches by Levi Pease and Reuben Sikes, with “two convenient wagons,” were recommended.<sup>15</sup> In 1780, Thomas was giving all possible encouragement, through his newspaper, to the first mill for spinning and weaving cotton. With pride, he notes:<sup>16</sup> “On Tuesday last, the first piece of corduroy made at the manufactory in this town was taken from the loom. Good judges speak highly of it, as superior to English. The carding machine, which is a great curiosity, as well as the spinning machine, has been completed some time. In a little time, it is hoped, the corduroys jeans, &c. made in this town will be sufficient to supply the country.” Such Utopian hopes were doomed to frustration but this was not from lack of “advertising” in the *Spy*.

It must be remembered that, at this time, Worcester, now a city of 200,000, with the towns of Sutton, Brookfield and Lancaster as its suburbs, was then *less* than these neighbors in size and estimated wealth. When the quota of blankets for the army was ordered by General Washington, Worcester’s quota was 27, while Brookfield and Sutton were assessed for 30 and Lancaster for 33; in the quota of troops, in 1776, for additional service, Worcester furnished 56, compared with 72 in Lancaster, 69 in Brookfield and 67 in Sutton although, in its total, Worcester gave to the War 47

officers and 389 privates.<sup>17</sup> As late as 1795 Worcester was third in population in the county, both Brookfield (with 3,100) and Sutton (with 2,642) exceeding Worcester with 2,100. Sutton had ten grist mills and six saw mills; Brookfield had seven grist mills and six saw mills and Worcester lagged behind, with only four in each class.

To increase his revenue and to widen his interests, Isaiah Thomas became a partner, for two years, with Joseph Trumbull in his drug-store. He announced his partnership<sup>18</sup> saying that he found insufficient returns from the business of the Press alone, so he had entered into "copartnership with Mr. Joseph Trumbull" and that they had opened "The Old Medical Store, a little Northward of the Court House and will sell 'Drugs and Medicines, a few barrels of best West India and New England Rum, Rock Salt, Coffee, Chocolate, White Thread, Writing Paper, a few books, Crooked Combs, &c.'"

Into the busy and checkered life of Isaiah Thomas during these later years, before the close of the Revolution, came one experience of temporary comfort and lasting happiness—namely, his marriage with Mrs. Mary Thomas Fowle. From the day of this union in Boston, May 26, 1779, until her death, in 1818, she gave to Isaiah Thomas unwavering loyalty. They were unusually congenial. He always referred to her in letters and his wills as "my best friend." At the time of their marriage, he was thirty and she was twenty-nine

years old. They were married in Boston, by Rev. Thaddeus Maccarty of Worcester. They had known each other long and intimately—for she was a “half-cousin” of Isaiah. Their grandfather, Peter Thomas, married twice and had eleven children. His first wife, Elizabeth Burroughs, was the mother of Moses Thomas, the father of Isaiah; his second wife, Mary Roby, was the mother of William, the father of Mary. Her mother, Rebecca Bass, who married William in 1748, was the “mother” of whom she spoke often and who was “remembered” affectionately by Isaiah Thomas, in his earlier wills.

Mary Thomas had married Isaac Fowle in 1769. She had borne—and lost by death, in 1772 and 1773—two daughters, Rebecca and Dorothea. Her husband entered the army in 1776 and died within a few months. There is no record, that I have found, about his service or the cause of his death. He may have been the Isaac Fowler (sic) whose pay receipt was given to Captain Samuel Thomas, dated North Kingston, Jan. 6, 1777.

The coming of Mary Fowle Thomas to Worcester, as the wife of the publisher of the *Massachusetts Spy*, did not arouse any vital interest, so far as one may discover. At that time, divorces were so rare and the attitude of society to them was so prejudicial that one reason for the reticence about the “new Mrs. Thomas” may have been due to Isaiah Thomas’s conjugal unhappiness and its sequel. His divorce, as noted, was not granted until 1777. With his poverty, which was

intimated in the issues of the *Spy* from 1775 to 1778, he had meager opportunities to enjoy social pleasures in Worcester. Moreover, it was a town with a group of wealthy Tories, who left their estates for a time but returned after the war; they would not be likely to offer hospitality to the rabid patriot-printer, with lack of all cultural background. By January, 1781, however, "prosperity was just around the corner."

Interesting evidence of this prosperity, real or prospective, is found in an entry in his Almanack margin, his Diary for 1781.

Expenses for building from Jan. 22 to July 5	£114-19-5
July 13 Raising dinner.....	1-10-0
Rum .....	0- 5-0
Workmen's dinner .....	2- 0-0
In December of that year, he had added a	
Clock .....	9-10-0

Back of the Court House stood, for scores of years, this first house "built and raised" in 1781. Later it had many additions. In one corner of it, before a separate building was added, the old press, which had been "stolen" out from Boston on the night of April 16, 1775, continued its work. Today it "rests from its labors" among the most valuable treasures in the American Antiquarian Society.

An excellent summary, from a modern viewpoint, of the influence, as well as the handicaps, of Thomas as publisher of the *Massachusetts Spy* is in the *Cambridge History of American Literature*.<sup>19</sup> There is com-

ment upon "this long battle between radicalism and conservatism," which is shown in the pages of this newspaper; the writer concludes: "Constantly on the verge of being suppressed, from its establishment in 1770 to the Revolution, it carried radicalism to its logical conclusion. When the *Spy* began to be reprinted in other papers, as 'the most daring production ever published in America,' the country as a whole was ready for Tom Paine's *Common Sense*."

Further comparison is made between the *Pennsylvania Magazine* and the *Royal American Magazine*, "edited respectively by the two firebrands, Thomas Paine and Isaiah Thomas." In both magazines were extracts from conventional English sources "which, in theory, they should have rejected. Thomas's *Royal American Magazine* is enlivened by the famous Paul Revere engravings and is otherwise interesting, particularly for its confident belief in the new country soon to be the United States."





*BOOK II*  
YEARS OF ACHIEVEMENT AND HONOR  
*1780-1831*



## CHAPTER IX

### PRINTING ALMANACKS, JUVENILES AND TEXT-BOOKS

BY degrees Isaiah Thomas overcame the handicaps of worn types and lack of good paper. At the close of the Revolution he secured some new types from England, as his letters testify. He gave a new, improved appearance to the masthead of his newspaper. There was a noticeable device here engraved. On the left was a figure representing America, "an Indian holding the cap of Liberty on a staff with the left hand and, in the right, a spear, aimed at the British lion, which appeared in the act of attacking her from the opposite shore." Around the device were the words, "Liberty Defended From Tyranny." On the right was a chain of thirteen links, with a star in each link, representing the thirteen states. This chain was placed in a circular form, leaving an opening for the arms of France, to which the ends of the chain were attached, and which perfected the circle. Above the arms were two hands clasped, and directly over them a sword, with its hilt resting on the clasped hands; the motto, "UNION." The title was thus new modeled, *Thomas's Massachusetts Spy; or the Worcester Gazette*. Motto: "The noble Efforts of a Virtuous, Free and United People, shall extirpate Tyranny and establish Liberty and Peace."<sup>1</sup>

Four pages, with five columns each, chronicled either more prosperity or more daring for the printer of the *Spy*. The form of the motto became more simple and effective: "*Noscere res humanas est Hominis*—Knowledge of the world is necessary for every man." For over a year was serialized Robertson's *History of America*, which was published in three volumes, in an English edition, and sold for six dollars. A group of local writers, led by the Reverend Mr. Nathan Fiske, contributed a column which was known as "The Worcester Speculator." Customers were urged *to pay money*, if possible; this was urgently reiterated, with this proviso: the printer assures his patrons that he will take payment in Indian Corn, or Wood, "if brought within three weeks of the date hereof."

Two sources of good revenue for this printer began early in his career and lasted for many years—Almanacks and juveniles. He began publishing Almanacks before he first came to Worcester; in Fowle's shop he had printed some in Boston before 1773. In the year, 1781, he records three thousand Almanacks printed and sold; by 1797, the number, noted in his Diary for that year, was twenty-nine thousand. How far back in literary history one may find the Almanack has been a subject of interesting study with differing estimates. Even its derivation is surmised—possibly from an Arabic word meaning a "sun-dial." English "calendars" were found in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Bradford's *Almanack* in Philadelphia preceded *Poor*

*Richard's Almanack*, which was associated with the name of Benjamin Franklin, from 1732 to a quarter-century later.

Among the Boston imprints by Isaiah Thomas, from his shop at the south corner of Marshall Lane, near the Mill-Bridge, in 1775, was one that bore the title, *Thomas's New England Almanack; or the Massachusetts Calendar, for the Year of our Lord Jesus Christ, 1775*. On the outside cover was a crude illustration which persisted for the next few years: a stocky boy, in a short jacket and bedecked shoes, with a strange instrument, intended for a telescope, in his hands, looking at the stars and crescent moon (in droll location and proportions) and below him were a globe and quadrant, with sky and houses over his head. The lines that accompanied this title-drawing were fitted to the theology and moral teaching of the times:

The flying days and months are hurrying on,  
Years press on years, impatient to be gone,  
With eager steps to bring the important hour,  
When angry fires this system shall devour.

Another woodcut, after the calendar, depicted Hannah Snell, the female soldier, and told her life-story. At the top of each page of the calendar were verses. Weather forecasts, days in the church calendar, meetings-days of court, tides, roads, lists of taverns, receipts for "a bilious Colick, an Asthmatical Cough, Gout in the Stomach" and other ills were given in the Almanacks from 1775 to 1778.

The astronomical observations, with their reactions upon the farmer's work and the human body, formed the primal purpose of these Almanacks. For Thomas, they were computed by different authorities, Benjamin West of Providence, Daniel George of Portland and Daniel Low but more often by Samuel Stearns of Paxton, "student of astronomy and physics." For a time, Stearns was under ban as a Royalist in his sympathies. He was once confined in jail in Worcester but was exonerated and released. In after years he went to England where he became a friend of the scientist, William Herschel. An entertaining note from him is in the *Spy*, October 25, 1785:

Sr,

You need not stop your Press one moment, for you may Rely upon it, that there will be no eclipse in December, 1786.

I have made a very Critical Examination. Dr. Low has made such mistakes before.

I am, Sr, Yours,  
SAML. STEARNS.

Mr. Thomas,  
Worcester, 25th Oct. 1785.

In the 1780's the full title of this Almanack was *Thomas's Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Connecticut Almanack*. By 1782, the boy in the design, already cited, had developed *wings*, and was surrounded by a conventionalized framework of flowers and leaves. The rhyme was still fatalistic in tone:

When *Motion* ceases, Time shall be no more;  
 The Sea, confus'd, shall leave her native Shore;  
 Devouring Fire from Pole to Pole shall fly,  
 And *Nature* drop into *Eternity*.

By 1784, however, the mood was more buoyant, with courage and relief at the ending of the Revolutionary War:

Hail, happy days! Now *Peace* her olive rears,  
 No more War's Clarion sounds upon our ears;  
*Freedom*, that heav'n born—with Minerva's shield,  
 Hath Vanquish'd *Tyrants* from the hostile field.  
 The *Sword* and *Spear*, forever may they rust,  
 Sheath'd, till Suns and Systems fall to dust!

In the Almanack for 1781 were verses of the Maid's description of the Man she would choose to marry and his reply.<sup>2</sup> They belong to the diction of the age that modeled its superficiality, ideas, its phrasing, after Alexander Pope. Said the Maid:

"Give him a form that may delight  
 My inward sense, my mental sight;  
 In every outward act design'd,  
 To speak an elegance of mind.  
 Sweet be the musick of his tongue,  
 And as the lyre of David strung,  
 To steal from each delightful day  
 Affliction, care and time away."

The answering desire of the Man was for his mistress (found in both November and December):

“Let her have complexion fair,  
 Sparkling eyes, and auburn hair;  
 Skin as white as neck of swan,  
 Smooth as down that grows thereon,  
 Smiling looks, and ruby lips,  
 Waist that tapers to her hips,  
 And fine arms that easy fall,  
 And soft hands and fingers small,  
 Skilled to touch the warbling strings  
 When her lays, or mine, she sings.”

“Let her frank and pleasant be,  
 To my friends as well as me,  
 And with wit and beauty's charms,  
 Glad my heart and bless my arms.  
 Be the produce of our joys,  
 Little girls and little boys.  
 O! the sweets of such a life!  
 To be blest with such a wife.  
 Grant but these, may I be poor,  
 When I ask a *little* more!”

On the page, opposite to this last saccharine stanza, are some practical figures, not in the handwriting of the publisher of the *Almanack*:

*Expenses*

1 almanack	7d
1 quire paper	4d
1 almanack	5d
1 advertisement	8d

With his customary self-assurance, Isaiah Thomas gives a detailed list of the “Instructive and Entertaining” features of his *Almanacks*, from “An Account



of the different Races by Voltaire" to "Poetical Pieces; Cheek Kissing, The Contented Cuckold, and Elegiac Reflections," with this: *N. B.*:

This ALMANACK is pronounced by able judges to be equal in Goodness to any published, and contains everything useful in such a publication and *more* in quantity and greater variety than any other Almanack published in this or the neighboring States, although but equal in price. They are sold, also, by the Groce [sic], Dozen, or single, at the house of I. Thomas in LONDONDERRY, as cheap as at the Printing-Office in Worcester.

The popularity of Thomas's Almanack spread rapidly. Often the post-riders carried the *Spy*, *Almanack*, and Sermons printed by Thomas, to the same households throughout the county and into New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Connecticut. There are many samples of the Sermons. Some were preached by the Reverend Mr. David Hall of Sutton. One such, on October 24, 1779, "Being Fifty Years after his Ordination," had a grave-stone admonition in verse:

Blessings divine on the Pious attend,  
Happy their Life, yet more happy their End.

Thanksgiving Sermons by the Reverend Mr. Thaddeus Maccarty of Worcester were in much favor. In 1778 was issued a Sermon by Zabdiel Adams, Pastor of the Church at Lunenburg, preached before the Masons in Lancaster, June 24, 1778, on "Brotherly Love and Compassion." This minister was a cousin of John Adams. According to a note<sup>3</sup> in the *Bibliography of Worcester* by Dr. Charles L. Nichols, this minister once

expressed regret that he had not studied law rather than divinity. He closed his argument, in regret at his choice of his profession, saying (had he been a lawyer) "Why should I not have been President as well as my cousin, John?"

Another popular sermonizer was Nathan Fiske of Brookfield; some of his "essays" in the *Spy* were later collected under the title *The Moral Monitor*. Josiah Spaulding of Uxbridge gave a sermon with a title which represented the theological viewpoint of the times: "The Nature and Criminality of Man's Inability to Serve the Lord." Against such a dismal prospect was a pamphlet, "Fanny, or Happy Repentance" (from the French of M. D'Arnaud), first American edition, 1785. Two interesting tracts about the Shakers were published in 1783 and 1784. Amos Taylor wrote a unique one, "A Narrative of the Strange Principles, Conduct and Character of the People Known as Shakers." More explicit was the tract by Valentine Rathbone, Minister of the Gospel, "A Brief account of a Religious Scheme, Taught and Propagated by a Number of Europeans, who lately lived in a Place called Nisqueunia in the State of New York but now residing in Harvard Common, Massachusetts, commonly called Shaking Quakers. To which is added a Dialogue between George the Third of Great Britain and his Ministers, giving an account of the late London Mob, the original of the Sect called Shakers. The Whole being a Discovery of the Wicked Machinations of the Principal Enemies of

America." This was a reprint. As one landmark of the history of the Shakers was *this* attack upon their creed with suspicions of their patriotism, both here and in England; at the other end of their history stands the "old Shaker house" of this same settlement in Harvard, Massachusetts, now on Prospect Hill, Harvard, one of the Wayside Museums, Incorporated, of which Miss Clara Endicott Sears has been the donor and the guardian.

Two additions had been made to the printing business of Thomas at Worcester. In 1782, a book bindery was added to his presses, with a competent, experienced workman in charge. At first, the results were often defective but, by 1793, when the Folio Bible was issued in its finest form, it exemplified finished qualities of the printing art and durability. In 1784, there was "An Agreement between Isaiah Thomas and Edward Bangs," on the ninth day of November, which is extant in original form; this was a second important mark of progress for the printer: "Said Edward hath engaged [sic] to build, on the land of the said Isaiah, a small house designed at present to be improved by him as an office, 31 feet long by 17 broad, according to the same already contracted for with George Webb and to finish the same according to his contract with Recompence Easy & to keep a true & just account of all the expenses." This was the separate printing-office used by Thomas for many years, with some additions; it is now on Grove Street, opposite the Rural Cemetery.

Because Thomas had lacked school education, as a boy, he was eager to publish some inexpensive "Speller" from English prints, like Dilworth's or Perry's. The author of this last-mentioned Speller, "The Only Sure Guide to the English Tongue"—the boast seemed brazen but was generally accepted—was a professor in Edinburgh Academy. The book passed through many editions in England; the "eighth edition" *there* became "the *First Worcester edition*," when it was published by Isaiah Thomas, in 1785, with the title: *The Only Sure Guide to the English Tongue, or a New Pronouncing Spelling Book*. "Upon the same plans as Perry's *Royal Standard English Dictionary* (A Comprehensive Grammar) by W. Perry." The frontispiece to Perry's *Only Sure Guide* was an allegorical picture of a Tree of Knowledge. One of the most grotesque illustrations was of "The naughty Girl reformed," standing under a fruit tree with "hands up" in the center of the picture while a countryman, with uplifted stick, stands at the left of her and a huge dog, presumably a bloodhound, is at her right; in the background, is the school-house. Her life story is so typical of the kind in these pioneer school-books that it may be here retold:

A CERTAIN little girl used to be very naughty; she frequently strayed away from home without the consent of her parents; was often quarrelsome and was sometimes so wicked as to tell lies. One day she went into an orchard, and, without leave, took some fruit and was carrying it off. A faithful dog observed her and pursued her, and would have bitten her, if a

countryman had not at that instant been passing who very humanely rescued her from the jaws of the furious animal. The danger she was in caused her to reflect on her past bad conduct—she repented of her folly, and became one of the best children in the neighbourhood.

The printing of this Perry Speller, followed by that of the *Royal Standard English Dictionary*, proved a lucrative venture for Isaiah Thomas, as his sales recorded reaching more than 25,000 in a year until 1804, when at least 300,000 copies was the aggregate. He dedicated the *Royal Standard Dictionary*, in its first American edition, "To the American Academy of Arts and Sciences," but a letter from Benjamin Franklin, dated 1787, accepted "the honor of dedication" to him. There is a letter, among the Thomas Papers, from Joseph Willard, dated Cambridge, May 30, 1788, which reads:

SIR,

It is with pleasure I embrace the present opportunity of enclosing copies of votes of thanks, one from the Corporation of the University, the other from the American Academy for your polite attention and kind present to each.

I am highly pleased with the execution of your edition of Perry's Dictionary. I think it does great credit to you and to the Commonwealth.

I wish you success, Sir, in all your exertions to diffuse useful knowledge and promote the interest of your country and am  
with great esteem,

Your very humble servt,

JOSEPH WILLARD.

This letter is significant. It shows the excellence of the printer's work and its appreciation by educators. It shows, also, the aim of Thomas to ally himself with the universities and academies of learning in America, through his *own* ambition and work and not from any legacies or outside influences.

One of the less successful ventures in publication, at this time, was the spelling-book which *he* compiled, with title, *A New American Spelling Book or the Child's Easy Introduction to Spelling and Reading the English Tongue, to which is added An Entire New Plain and Comprehensive English Grammar. Also The Shorter Catechism. By the Assembly of Divines*. This book, with its long title, was intended for the use of teachers who lacked classical education. He realized his lack of fitness for the work and acknowledged its defects. Another experiment for those of older years and practical education was *A Specimen of Isaiah Thomas's Printing Types, dedicated to the Lovers of Literature and Encouragers of Printing (The First and Best of Arts)*. At the same time he produced *The Writing Scholar's Assistant*, with models of "plain, Running Hand." The handwriting of Isaiah Thomas, at its best, was remarkably legible, with well-formed letters. How he did delight in composing these long "epistles" and Prefaces!

Into the literary field, where the English readers, spellers and primers seemed to have the monopoly, came an American rival, in 1783, Noah Webster. Born in

Hartford and a graduate of Yale, this young teacher in Orange County, New York, was waiting for an opportunity to study law. For the use of his own scholars, he compiled a simple spelling book which he introduced to a Hartford printer, in 1783. Then he decided to add a Dictionary and a Grammar and Reader; his choice of title was *The American Instructor*. On advice of the president of Yale, however, he agreed to the cumbersome title—which he later abandoned—*The First Part of a Grammatical Institute of the English Language*.

The privilege of publishing these books was not given to one single printer, although Webster had to give bonds to ensure the Hartford publisher against loss. The Supreme Court of Connecticut passed a law restricting sales of this edition in other states, from which later appeals were made. Isaiah Thomas realized the value of these epochal books. He was anxious to secure rights for publishing them in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Editions were being printed in Albany, New York, Philadelphia and Boston. The forty-eight letters written by Isaiah Thomas, most of them to the Hartford publishers, Hudson & Goodwin, and Nathaniel Patten<sup>4</sup> (now in the New York Historical Society) furnish a mine of information on this matter of Webster's copyright and interchange of advice and books.

Many of the letters were written after Thomas had established his presses in Boston as well as in Worcester, in 1789, and was issuing new editions of the *Gram-*

*matical Institute* and Jedediah Morse's geographies. A few letters, during the period from 1780 to 1789, give testimony to the enterprise and courage of Thomas and his frequent shortage of funds to meet his bills. He appeals for "more time" and part payments. There is one letter, at the American Antiquarian Society, from Noah Webster to Thomas, dated Hartford, February 23, 1784, which is full of interest. Evidently, it was an answer to a request from Thomas for lower price on the sheets, "first mentioned." Webster replied:

I shall sell them (sheets) at 12 pr. Dozen bound, as the first part, neatly bound in leather, at 18. But I must expect cash in hand for all I sell—as, otherwise, I cannot carry on the business. I am under a necessity for the Cash. Punctuality is essential to have & as I am determined to be punctual myself, I expect that every man, who wishes to deal upon the principle of reciprocal benefit, will be so too.

I am much obliged to you for your paper & I will thank you to continue it—for which I will pay you when you please.

I am, Sir, your very

humble Servant,

NOAH WEBSTER.

Soon after the correspondence with Noah Webster began, Isaiah Thomas had formed partnership with Ebenezer Andrews of Boston. They had a printing-office on Newbury Street. They had book-stores there and in Worcester and surrounding towns. Apparently, there was a delay of a few years, after the first overtures were made to Noah Webster, because the copyrights of the latter's books were not purchased by



Thomas until 1789. He paid £200 for copyright of the first part of the *Speller*, and £50 each for the *Grammar and Selections*; the copyright was to last for fourteen years. It proved a good investment for both Webster and Thomas and his partner. In his MS. Catalogue, Isaiah Thomas said that they printed thirty editions, or 300,000 copies of the speller, fourteen editions of the *Selections* and six of the *Grammar*. In 1804, the year when their copyright expired, they printed five editions.

In the same year that Isaiah Thomas secured the copyright from Webster, his firm in Boston printed *A Dissertation on the English Language*, a new mode of spelling devised by the lexicographer and the next year *A Collection of Essays* and *The Prompter* which was reprinted many times.

As the years passed, the name of Isaiah Thomas became associated with another book in which he had a personal interest, far greater than in these school-books from texts prepared by others. As an apprentice he had found the Bible as valuable for him as any Dictionary.

*The Psalter; Psalms of David; Proverbs of Solomon; Christ's Sermon on the Mount; Being an Introduction for Children to the Reading of the Holy Scriptures* had been published by him in 1784, the same year in which *The Royal Primer* was issued. He had also printed selections from *Watts's Hymns* before he produced what is now a curio in Biblical literature:

## A CURIOUS HIEROGLYPHIC BIBLE

Select Passages  
in the New and Old Testaments,  
represented with Emblematical Figures  
for the

Amusement of Youth  
designed chiefly

To familiarize tender Age, in a pleasing, and diverting  
Manner, with early Ideas of the Holy Scriptures.

To Which are subjoined

A Short Account of the LIVES of the EVANGELISTS, and  
other Pieces.

Illustrated with nearly Five Hundred CUTS.

The First Worcester Edition.

Printed at Worcester, Massachusetts,  
by ISAIAH THOMAS,

And Sold, Wholesale and Retail, at his BOOKSTORE.

MDCCLXXXVII

The adjective *curious* was fittingly chosen, nor was *hieroglyphic* inept, as a description of this 12mo. with its grotesque illustrations, or cuts. The cover picture was a sample; Adam and Eve, nude but somewhat vague in anatomy, standing under a tree while, in the clouds above them, was one of the most "curious" representatives of an angry Jehovah that can be located in primitive "art." The Bible passages, all with "cuts," were well-selected to give children the *story* element in the Bible, from Genesis to the Maccabees, and brief passages from the New Testament. Some tales of David, Samson, Solomon, and Susannah were expur-

gated as well as abbreviated but, in general, were more descriptive than sermonic. The Lives of the Apostles were written in less simple words, intended for older readers.

In the exhaustive, fascinating study of *Children's Books in England; Five Centuries of Social Life*, by F. J. Harvey Darton,<sup>5</sup> is a paragraph relevant to the work of Isaiah Thomas as publisher of school-books and juveniles:

What is certain about America's handsome share in this branch of literature is that Isaiah Thomas of Worcester, Mass. U.S.A. produced a third edition of his own *Mother Goose's Melody*, in 1799. It has been conjectured that his first edition was about 1783, and that he took it, as he took other books, from Newbury's lost original. He is said to have been the first to introduce music-types into the States. For that, and for *Mother Goose*, wherever he found her, he deserves well of his country.

In 1786, Isaiah Thomas began reprinting English juveniles, largely from Newbury's originals; he got some types from Joseph Fry & Son of London, as receipted bills of 1786 show. Among the 342 titles of books, which issued from his Worcester presses, were scores of those for the "Instruction and Entertainment of Children"; to be exact there were at least 66 titles and 51 editions of these Juveniles. He had purchased a lot of land in Quinsigamond in 1785 for a paper mill, but he sold it two years later without building upon it. Then, in 1793, he repurchased the

land and erected here a paper mill. One of his workmen here was Zenas Crane who later established paper mills in the Berkshires, now at Dalton.

Among the letters from Thomas Evans of London to Mr. Thomas, with accounts of invoices and delays in their delivery, none is more interesting than what was, probably, the first:

4th August, 1784.

SIR,

I refer you to Mr. Dix and Mr. Trumbull for particulars respecting your commission for Books falling into my hands & I have only to say that I have executed it as near to order as possible and it was on account of the good things Mr. Dix and Mr. Trumbull said of you that I executed it at all.

Several of the Chap Books, Children's Books and others are quite out of print, but I have made up the quantity of small Books, by substituting others instead of such as could not be procured, and I hope the assortment will prove satisfactory to you.

THOMAS EVANS.

The references to "Mr. Dix and Mr. Trumbull" were to sponsors of Mr. Thomas in other ways, Dr. Elisha Dix and Joseph Trumbull of Worcester.

Others letters from Thomas Evans reveal the delays and expenses incurred by Thomas in this importation. One letter, dated February 2, 1785, explains that an invoice had been delayed because the ship was obliged to go into Antigna to be refitted for the voyage. Various accounts, kept by Mr. Thomas in his *Almanacks*, indicate the amount that he paid from year to

year for these English books, often more than £130; he was given six months' credit.

In the American Antiquarian Society are a perfect copy of *Mother Goose's Melody*, marked "The Second Worcester Edition, MDCCXCIV," and a much torn copy of what was undoubtedly the first edition, in 1786. The evidence of the time of printing (of the defective copy) is fixed by the kind of types used in other books of 1785-1787—and by the identical cut, with the rhyme of "Cock-a doodle doo," which was used in "*Nurse True Love's New Year's Gift*," 1787. Part I of this 24mo., of 72 pages, contains "the most celebrated SONGS and LULLABIES of the good old Nurses, calculated to amuse Children and to excite them to sleep. Part II: Those of that sweet Songster and Nurse of Wit and Humour, Master William Shakespeare. Embellished with Cuts, and Illustrated with NOTES and MAXIMS, Historical, Philosophical, and Critical." Probably these Maxims, like the Songs, were intended "to excite children to sleep."

"Preface by a Very Great Writer of Very Little Books" traces the origin of these rhymes from Druids, or the time of Henry the Fifth whose exploits and prowess were sung to a march (suggested in a page of music) and the "jest song" by his enemies, the tale of the old woman with her broom, "To sweep the cobwebs from the sky." To a score of familiar Nursery "Songs and Lullabies" were added the Shakespearean songs: "Where the Bee Sucks," "O Mistress Mine,"

"Under the Greenwood Tree," "Blow, blow," and "Hark, the Lark."

It took some courage to publish, and advertise, Nonsense Rhymes and Nursery Tales, or Fables, for Children, even so late as the beginning of the nineteenth century, especially in Puritan New England. "Peter Parley" or Samuel G. Goodrich, the Hartford writer and publisher, declared against such methods of instruction in the earlier decades of the 1800's. Isaiah Thomas, in his *Almanack* for 1775, had three verses in which he questioned—and then ardently defended—*Fables* for instruction of old and young. One of his first examples of printing and illustrating (when he was a small lad, an apprentice, as has been cited) was *Tom Thumb's Playbook*, 1762.

In addition to the strictly moral and religious books for children, issued by Isaiah Thomas from his presses in Worcester and Boston, there had been many predecessors of the Juveniles. For the Exhibition of Children's Books Published in the United States before 1800, which was held at the American Antiquarian Society, in 1928, a complete list was prepared, from which I choose several of the juveniles mentioned in this chapter. *A Token for Children* which stressed the pious tone, was a popular title; it was given by Cotton Mather to his book, *A Token, for the Children of New England*, in 1700; it was the title of the book by James Janeway, a minister, which was printed by Zechariah Fowle, the "master of Thomas," in 1771.

The name of "N. Coverly" of Boston, bookseller and pioneer promoter of *real* children's literature, is often associated with that of Isaiah Thomas. In 1779, Thomas announced *Entertaining Story Book for Little Boys and Girls* and, in the same year, an edition of *The Wonderful Life and Surprising Adventures of the Renowned Hero, Robinson Crusoe, The Puzzling Cap*, in 1792, and *Tom Thumb's Little Book*, in 1794. Other printers in Philadelphia, Hartford and Northampton were issuing collections of Moral and Entertaining Stories. There were hundreds of editions of the *New England Primer*, with their variations and printers; many are at the American Antiquarian Society.

The juveniles, upon the list published by Isaiah Thomas and Isaiah Thomas, Jr., would make another large book, if they were to be examined in detail and reproduced in text and pictures. We have chosen a few only for samples.

An example of the cleverness of this publisher, in awakening interest in forthcoming books, or those already out from the press, is found in the Advertisement which was included in the 1791 edition of *Mother Goose's Melody* and *Nurse True Love's New Year's Gift*. It reads thus: "And when their minds were so enlarged as to be capable of other entertainment she recommended to them the Lilliputian Magazine and other books that are sold by Mr. Thomas at his bookstore near the Court House." He was a high-powered salesman!

Preceding the *Mother Goose's Melody* was a unique juvenile, entitled *The History of MASTER JACKEY and MISS HARRIET to which is added A few MAXIMS for the Improvement of the Mind*. Dedicated to the Good Children of the United States of America. First Worcester Edition; Printed at Worcester, Massachusetts, By Isaiah Thomas, And Sold, Wholesale and Retail, at his Book Store, MDCCLXXXVII." Among the typical verses in the story is this:

Sweetness of temper in a child  
To favour recommends,  
The pliant, affable and mild  
Are sure of gaining friends.

The story is laid in a county of England, near "the delightful borders of the Severn." Here lived the Earl of Fairfane, "remarkable for his generosity and benevolence to the poor and affability and good nature to the rich." In the village lived Mr. Graemor, "a tradesman of indifferent circumstances." He had a son, John or Jackey, and a nephew, Master Tommy. Miss Harriet was daughter of a grocer at Shrewsbury. Through the two Gates, on the Fairfane estate—that of Vice, colorful, and that of Virtue, gloomy, Harriet passes, choosing Virtue, which leads to Happiness and finding this in marriage with Jackey. So readers should

From their example Virtue learn to prize,  
That so you may to their attainments rise!



One of the story-books which was a great favorite for many years, and passed through several editions, was *The Adventures of a Pincushion*, published in 1788. This "was intended especially for the Use of Young Ladies." The author assured readers that the purpose was "presenting the juvenile reader with a few pages which should be innocent of corrupting, if they did not amuse." Mrs. Airy, the mother, is collecting silks for workbags, as the story opens; her daughters, Martha and Charlotte, are the leading characters. Martha upsets the china with which Charlotte was playing but a quarrel is avoided by the good nature of Charlotte and apology of Martha: the sisters ask for "bits of silk" to make a pincushion. The work of Martha is careful and painstaking; that of Charlotte is more carefree. The pincushion, finished, has several adventures, in a pocket, a hen-yard and "under a water-tub." The "moral," however, is not lacking:

From objects most minute and mean,  
A virtuous mind may moral glean.

More gay in title and color of the leather binding, is *Be Merry and Wise; or the Cream of the Jest, and the Marrow of Maxims for the Conduct of Life* (1786). "Published for the Use of all good Little Boys and Girls. By Tommy Trapwit, Esq. Adorned with Cuts." The motto is from Grotius: "Would you be agreeable in Company, and useful in Society; carry

some Merry Jests in Your Mind, and Honest Maxims in your Heart."

In this collection of Maxims are a few that combine wit and wisdom: "An arch wag said, 'Tailors were like woodcocks, for they got their substance by their *long bills*.' 'Do nothing without foresight or forecast, a little wariness prevents much weariness.' 'The best jeweller uses the least silver and he that will set his thoughts to advantage must not overload them with words.' 'Flattery is a sort of bad money to which our vanity gives currency.'"

*Lottery Book for Children*, "gaining approval of Court of Common Sense and Secretary, Peter Prudence," contains an alphabet, much like that of the first *Tom Thumb's Play Book* printed by Isaiah Thomas as a young apprentice (beginning with *A* for Apple-Pye and ending with *X* for Xerxes and *Z* for Zantippe, Zebra and Zany). More ethical and less entertaining is *The Sister's Gift or the Naughty Boy Reformed* (1789). "Published for the Advantage of the Rising Generation." Amusing are the illustrations of Miss Allworthy "going abroad." Kitty Courtly and her brother, Billy, are the actors in this melodrama of rescue, from cruelty and evil, of the brother by his "gentle and beautiful sister."

One may imagine the smile of irony with which Isaiah Thomas, with his keen mind and knowledge of the world, read and printed some of these very Moral Tales. They sold well, however; they were not always



*He! He! He!*

Be MERRY and WISE;  
OR, THE  
CREAM of the JESTS,  
AND THE  
MARROW of MAXIMS,  
For the Conduct of LIFE.

*Published for the Use of all good Little  
BOYS and GIRLS.*

By TOMMY TRAPWIT, Esq.  
ADORNED with CUTS.

*Would you be agreeable in Company, and useful  
to Society; carry some merry jests in your  
Mind, and honest Maxims in your Heart.*  
GROTIUS.

THE FIRST WORCESTER EDITION.

WORCESTER, (MASSACHUSETTS)  
PRINTED BY ISAIAH THOMAS,  
AND SOLD AT HIS BOOK STORE.  
SOLD ALSO BY E. BATTLE, BOSTON.  
MDCCLXXVI.



*Instruction with Delight.*

A LITTLE PRETTY  
POCKET-BOOK,  
INTENDED FOR THE  
INSTRUCTION and AMUSEMENT  
OF

LITTLE MASTER TOMMY,  
AND  
PRETTY MISS POLLY.

With Two LETTERS from  
JACK the GIANT-KILLER;  
AND ALSO

A BALL and PINCUSHION;  
The Use of which will infallibly make Tommy  
a good Boy, and Polly a good Girl.

To which is added,  
A LITTLE SONG-BOOK,  
BEING

A NEW ATTEMPT to teach CHILDREN  
the Use of the English Alphabet, by Way  
of Diversion.

THE FIRST WORCESTER EDITION.

PRINTED at WORCESTER, Massachusetts.  
By ISAIAH THOMAS,  
And SOLD, Wholesale and Retail, at his Book-  
STORE. MDCCLXXVII.

TITLE PAGES OF TWO JUVENILE PUBLICATIONS,  
PRINTED AND SOLD BY ISAIAH THOMAS



so sentimental as the titles might indicate. *The Sugar Plumb or Sweet Amusement for Leisure Hours*, as example, included among other selections, the "Story of King Lear and his Daughters." *Wisdom of Crop, the Conjuror*, passed into three editions between 1786 and 1794. It offered some real amusement as well as moralizing about "the celebrated Tom Trot who rode before all boys in the race to the kingdom at the top of the hill, Learning." He must have been cousin to the hero of another popular tale, *The Renowned History of Giles Gingerbread, or the Little Boy Who Lived upon Learning* (1787). Many of these books were bound in fine leather, often blue or red, with gilt lettering.

There were some real juvenile classics, sold as reprints from English books, amid so much that was stilted "moral nurture for babes." *Goody Two Shoes*, *Cock Robin*, *The House that Jack Built*, and *Travels and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* were on the Thomas lists in 1786 and 1787. As the years passed, the printer enlarged his scope to include many books for older readers, as we shall note later. He was especially proud of his books on history, physics and astronomy. A collection of poems, with "beautiful engravings" and fine binding, was another favorite to which he referred with appreciation, both of its contents and exterior; BEAUTIES OF THE MUSES: or *Select Sentimental POEMS AND ELEGIES* (1793). Among the selections that have been forgotten, like verses by Dr.

Porteous and by Dr. Dodd, are such classic poems as "Elegy in a Churchyard," "The Traveller" and "The Deserted Village."

In his preface to this book, Isaiah Thomas wrote: "The Sentiment and beauty contained in the Poetry of this Collection, being so universally admired, that, at the request of a number of friends, the editor has been induced to lay them before the public in one volume. The owner of this little book will find it no disgraceful companion. And the merit of the Authors of the several pieces contained in it is such as to claim a place in the best libraries."

One of the colleagues and best friends of Thomas, for scores of years, was Matthew Carey of Philadelphia. They exchanged visits and they exchanged books. Both were fearless and progressive in soliciting subscriptions for new publications which, for that time, might arouse criticism because of their liberality of thought. At the period when Isaiah Thomas was experimenting with magazine-publishing (*The Massachusetts Magazine*) in Boston, in 1789, Matthew Carey issued the journal of longer life, the *American Museum*. A letter from him to the Worcester printer is in the Thomas Papers, at the American Antiquarian Society:

PHILADELPHIA, Oct. 12, 1789.

DEAR SIR,

Per Capt. Rich, I have forwarded to you the poems & jest books, in exchange for your books. If you dispose of the jest

books soon, it may perhaps suit you to take more of them in exchange for the Children's books.

I request you will forward me all the Museums you have left through the post office.

I remain, Sir,

Your obt. h<sup>ble</sup> Serv't,

MATTHEW CAREY.

Mr. Carey was as concise in *his* phrases and abbreviations as Isaiah Thomas was prolix and discursive.

A glance at the books for adults, to be found at the Thomas's book-stores, as the new century came in, showed on the lists some classics, by Goldsmith, Cowper, and Pope (*Vicar of Wakefield*, even then a favorite), *Moral Tales from the French of Mme. Genlis*, and, beside these such once-commended, now-forgotten publications as *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* by Mrs. Chapone (2 vols.), *Fordyce's Sermons to Young Women*, and *Songs, Comick, Satirical and Sentimental*, by George A. Stevens. In 1787, was published *Cato, A Tragedy, as it is acted at the Theatres*, "by Mr. Addison. Now Published to aid education in the Schools of the United States." The same year appeared the second Worcester edition of *Tom Jones*.

## CHAPTER X

### MUSICK BOOKS AND FOLIO BIBLES

TO use a symbolic phrase of to-day, Isaiah Thomas had "arrived" in the 1780's. His years of adventure were changing to years of achievement. He had developed traits of steadiness and practical wisdom without loss of zest or courage. He was still an adventurer when he built and operated his paper mill, when he imported chap-books and juveniles from England, when he introduced musical types for books instead of engraved forms as was customary in America. He was a clever publicity agent for his own wares. A few days before his edition of *Perry's Speller* was issued, there appeared in the columns of the *Spy*, an article signed "An Old Schoolmaster." This was all in italics, a tribute to the book by Perry, "as excelling all others of its kind," stressing its wide use in American schools and ending with the comment: "It would have been introduced into academies at Andover and Leicester only that copies of it were not to be purchased, as all those that had been imported had been sold. This was in the *Spy*, March 3, 1785; in the issue of the newspaper, March 31st, was a half-column advertisement of Thomas's imprint of "this Valuable



Book, so well-known as to render it needless to say anything in the way of recommendation."

There had been similar preparedness in announcing the publication of his first "Musick Books." In the *Spy* for January 6, 1785, was this note: "MUSICK: ISAIAH THOMAS has just received from England a beautiful set of Musical Types; by which he is enabled to print any kind of Church or other Musick, in a neat and elegant manner, and can afford to do it cheaper than such work has been heretofore done in this country from copper and pewter plates."

This initial advertisement was followed, January 16, 1786, by this definite publicity:

The Collection of SACRED HARMONY, now in the Press, viz. Part I. An introduction to the Grounds of Musick, or Rules for Learners. II: A large Number of Psalm and Hymn Tunes, from the most approved ancient and modern Authors; with several new ones never before published, the whole suited to all metres usually sung in churches. III. Select Anthems, Fugues and favourite pieces of Musick with an additional number of Psalm and Hymn Tunes. The whole compiled for the use of Schools and Singing Societies and recommended by many approved Teachers of Psalmody.

At the request of several Teachers of Psalmody, a few copies of the first and second Parts are this day published in order to accomodate such Schools as are in want of Books.

The third part containing as before mentioned will be published with all possible expedition. Those who purchase the first and second parts, which are now ready for sale, may be accomodated with the third part separately, as soon as it is out of the press.

This was a busy season for the Worcester printer. He was advertising his "Almanack with an Ephemeris for 1786," and including all manner of information from that of "The Brahmin's Prayer" to "an effectual and simple remedy for an Apoplectick fit." He was offering places to "ONE or Two likely LADS, about 14 years of age, as Apprentices to the Printing Business" and, also, "A journeyman Bookbinder, who is a good workman." He was announcing CHILDREN'S BOOKS; *A Great Variety* of little books for Masters and Misses, from 2 to 12 years of age, calculated to allure them into a love of learning and rival each other in the pursuit of knowledge. Very proper for parents as presents to their children, as New Year's gifts, &c., were recommended, "with a large assortment of Books and Stationery, at his Bookstore, sold as cheap as at any Book Store in the Commonwealth."

While he prided himself upon being a pioneer publisher of Musick from Types, and new collections of Psalmody, he was willing to acknowledge his competitors in this way and advertised:<sup>1</sup> "Billings' Psalm Singer's Assistant, to be sold at ISAIAH THOMAS's Book Store." He was ready to acknowledge his indebtedness for stimulus and material for his "Musick Books" to this noted Singing-Master of Boston, William Billings. After a few earlier editions of Brady & Tate's Psalms and minor books, Billings had compiled *The New England Psalm Singer, or American Chorister*, which had been published in 1770. With

generous appreciation of his forerunner, in the effort to familiarize old and young with the best music for Churches and Schools, Thomas says, in an advertisement of his own *Laus Deo*:

Mr. William Billings of Boston was the first person we know of that attempted to compose Church Musick in the New England States; his Musick met with approbation. Some tunes of his composing are inserted in this work, and are extracted from the Chorister's Companion; printed in Connecticut from Copper plates. Several adepts in musick followed Mr. Billings' example, and the New England states can now boast of many authors of Church Musick, whose compositions do them honour. A number of their tunes are in this Collection, and we hope are done in such a manner as will give them satisfaction. That the following sheets are free from faults of several kinds, the Publisher presumes not to say—undoubtedly there are many; but he hopes none very essential.

In a copy of the first edition (1786) of Thomas's *Laus Deo*, in the handwriting of a former librarian of the American Antiquarian Society, is written: "I believe this is the first specimen of music printed from types in this country. Before this, it has been engraved." The present librarian, Mr. Robert W. G. Vail, has asserted that there was an earlier example of printing from types, brought from Holland, but this was not known in New England when Isaiah Thomas was issuing his statements about his Musick Books.<sup>2</sup>

Before Thomas signed his Preface, your "Very Humble Servant," he expressed obligations to the "Many Gentlemen well skilled in Vocal Musick" who

had assisted him and he hoped that "any little inaccuracies that have slipped notice in copying the tunes, will be viewed with Candour, and mended by the observer's pen." Before the sixth edition appeared, in 1791, Thomas secured the services of another veteran music-master, Oliver Holden, of Charlestown, Baptist minister and storekeeper, as well as composer of the tune, "Coronation." With characteristic skill in advertising, Thomas listed books of music to be sold at his book-store, like *The Massachusetts Compiler*, by H. Gram, S. Holyoke, and O. Holden, and *The Rural Harmony*, by Jacob Kimball, Jr., with this note about the latter book: "It is well calculated for a school book, and every encourager of American music should become a purchaser."

Wherever the Hallelujah Chorus is sung, tribute to Isaiah Thomas should be paid for his fearless inclusion of this grand music in the first edition of *Laus Deo* and all later issues. His progressive spirit and patriotism were echoed in the explanation of this inclusion, in his preface at the beginning of Part III: "Having been favoured with a copy of the Grand Chorus in that celebrated work, *The Messiah*, by Handel, one of the greatest musicians that ever delighted the ears of mortals, I am happy to give it a place in this collection. Although it has been thought by some too hard to be learned and too delicate to be sung, even by the best performers in this country, I doubt not but that there are many who have not only the skill to learn but

judgment to perform it, at least equal to some of the best singers in Europe."

Among the many familiar hymn tunes, still found in modern hymnals and listed in *Laus Deo*, were "Adoration," "Advent," "Denmark," "Salem," "Uttoxeter," "Zion," "Pilgrim's Song." In the second edition, 1788, the publisher added to the back of the title-page "an embellishment," with a youth, symbolizing the "Spirit of Musick" amid musical scores and instruments, atop a tablet framed in leaves and on the tablet the words:

#### ON MUSICK

DOWN steers the *Bass* with grave majestick air,  
And up the *Treble* mounts with shrill career;  
With softer sounds, in mild melodious maze,  
Warbling between, the *Tenor* gently plays:  
But if th' aspiring *Altus* join its force,  
See! like the Lark, it wings its tow'ring course;  
Then rolls the rapture through the air around  
In the full magic melody of sound.

Below, with letters all in italics, was the salubrious stanza:

'Tis thine, sweet Power, to raise the thought sublime,  
Quell each rude passion and the heart refine;  
Soft are thy strains as Gabriel's gentlest string,  
Calm as the breathing Zephyrs of the spring.

Examples of sentiment and strained efforts at rhymes, among these Hymn tunes, are "Ascension," key of G, text from the 47th Psalm:

Oh for a shout of sacred joy  
To God the Sovereign King;  
Let ev'ry land their tongues employ,  
And hymns of triumph sing.

Or "Peace," key of F, the 133rd Psalm:

How pleasant 'tis to see  
Kindred and friends agree,  
Each in his proper station  
And each fulfill his part,  
With sympathising heart  
In all the cares of life and love.

Or "Berwick," key of D:

Great God, attend, while Zion sings  
The joy that from thy presence springs;  
To spend one day with thee on earth  
Exceeds a thousand days of mirth.

Worcester church-goers had been more conservative than those of Boston and some other places in substituting psalm singing, by groups, in place of the old-time "limning" by the ministers, as leaders. For a decade, from 1769 to 1779, the conflict had been renewed at intervals. By 1779 the singers were grouped in the front seats of the front gallery and a vote was recorded "that the mode of singing in the congregation here be without reading the psalms, line by line, to be sung." Some of the good elders of the Worcester congregation objected—to the bitter end. One Deacon Chamberlain, on the first Sabbath of its trial, insisted upon reading the first line in a loud voice. The singers,

however, failed to pause and they sang lustily; undaunted, he continued his "limning" until his voice was drowned by theirs; then he took his hat and left the meeting-house. He remained away for several Sundays. On his return, "He was censured and deprived of communion because of his absences from meetings."

With a desire to give greater publicity to his adopted town, and to vary the text of his *Worcester Collection of Sacred Harmony*, Mr. Thomas, in his third edition (1789), offered a new tune, with this somewhat involved explanation:

A complaint has been made, and with great justice, that good tunes so common wear out by becoming too familiar to the ear by frequent repetitions. The Editor hath long wished to remedy this evil and in order to effect it, has had a tune made, by way of experiment, viz. Worcester New Long Metre which is of sufficient length for a portion of psalmody to be sung at one time. By this means, as there will be no repetition of the tune in church services, it will consequently last much longer than tunes composed in the usual way. Should the plan be liked, the genius of the musicians of our country will have a larger field, for variety of moods may be contained in one tune and the grave and lively strains adopted at pleasure.

A good example of the discursive, painstaking diction of this publisher!

The words in the "tunes" and anthems were generally more "grave" than "lively." More literary flavor was introduced by some of the singing-masters; Oliver Holden included Pope's "Ode on Music" and "other

lyric pieces" in his collection of *American Harmony*, which was published by Thomas & Andrews, in 1792. Here was an anthem for Thanksgiving Day, with the admonition of enjoyment and sharing, "to be sung by treble and bass":

Go your way; eat the fat and drink the sweet  
And send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared.  
Hallelujah!

Another kind of book was claiming the attention of Thomas during the years when he published his Musick Books—namely, the Psalter and the Folio Bibles. In his *History of Printing*, he gives scattered information about printers of the Bible in this country, from Daniel Henchman's secret commission to have a small edition printed by Kneeland & Green, to the ventures of Benjamin Mecom, whose mother was a sister of Benjamin Franklin. Thomas shows plates for pages of the New Testament and a large edition of the Psalter, and leads up naturally to his own noteworthy editions of the Bible.<sup>3</sup>

One of the treasured memories of the family of Isaiah Thomas, which was verified by a letter from a relative of Benjamin Franklin, was the compliment paid to the Worcester printer by his friend in Philadelphia. The letter said: "Being one day in the Doctor's library, I opened an elegant folio Bible and said, 'This is a most splendid edition.' 'Yes,' he said, 'it was printed by Baskerville, the greatest printer in Eng-



land, and your countryman, Mr. Thomas of Worcester, is the Baskerville of America.'"

This tribute has special significance because one of the most outstanding examples of the persistent and artistic skill of this "Baskerville of America" was the printing of his folio Bibles. He had long planned this work, the first of the kind in the country. To him, the printing of these Bibles was more than an expression of pride in his "art." It was one form of his patriotic creed. He is not generally classified as a religious leader; he was liberal and progressive in ideas of individual freedom, but he was a man with strong, moral convictions of integrity. That religion, founded upon the Bible, was indissolubly linked with the civic life of his country is given full statement in the preface to his first folio Bible, printed in 1791. After emphasis upon what civil authority had done for betterment, "by securing equal privileges for all," he affirms that it must be "their ardent and united wish, independently of foreign aid, to be supplied with copies of the sacred Scriptures, the foundation of their religion." Ministers aided him in preparing the Bibles for publication.

His partner in Boston writes about printing Paine's writings: "I dare say that Mr. Jefferson has them, and would willingly lend us them for so laudable a purpose. Suppose you should address a line to him on the subject? . . . I wrote you last that we had almost got up to the Appendix of the Musick. Wish for your opinion."

In later lists of their publications may be found proposals for printing the writings of Thomas Paine, so the suggestion was accepted. The publication of the *Prayer Book*, or *Morning and Evening Prayer*, involved some difficulty over copyright and approval by "the Convention." A partial folio, six and one-half by eleven and one-fourth inches, was issued in 1792, and a full folio, seven and seven-eighths by thirteen and three-fourths inches, was published by Thomas & Andrews in 1795, and "sold at their Book-Store, 45 Newbury Street, Sign of Faust's Statue."

Definite information about the delay in publishing the *Prayer Book*, and the assistance of Dr. Parker (of Trinity Church, Boston) is given by Mr. Andrews in a letter to Mr. Thomas, March 18th, 1792.

SIR,

I want three bundles of six reams of your bible paper; Have agreed with Dr. Parker to print some extracts from the folio Prayer Book to complete some folio Prayer Books, belonging to the Church, &c. and at the same time shall print some in quarto for sale, as the extracts contain almost all of the Prayer Book which is altered—these, I doubt not will sell well & induce our subscribers to the Prayer Book (of which there are I believe 2 or 3000) to wait until after the Convention meets when Dr. Parker thinks we had better print an octavo instead of a 12mo.

The *Columbian Centinel* (June 27, 1792), advertised "Episcopal prayer Book Just published in Quarto, on a large type and to be sold by Thomas & Andrews."<sup>4</sup>

This moot question of the folio of the Thomas's *Prayer Book* is thus settled.

New editions of the Tate and Brady versions of the Psalms were issued from time to time by Thomas. There must have been certain occasions when, if he read the stanza from Psalm 39, he would feel its timeliness in his own life, as we of later days may realize its truth:

Man like a shadow vainly walks  
With fruitless cares oppres'd,  
He heaps up wealth but cannot tell  
By whom 'twill be possess'd.

He was the victim of varying fortunes while he was printing his Musick Books. A turn of ill fortune, which he met with characteristic pluck and ingenuity, came the very year when the first edition of his *Laus Deo* was issued. In fact, this book was advertised, when complete, not in the *Massachusetts Spy and Worcester Gazette* (as its title now read) but in a new publication, the *Worcester Magazine*. For nearly two years the *Spy* was suspended. The first intimation of this change, due to the "tax on newspapers" voted by the Massachusetts Legislature, was expressed in a column from the *Pennsylvania Chronicle of Freedom*, reprinted in the *Spy*, September 1, 1785:

Every man in the thirteen states from New Hampshire to Georgia should pour out incessant execrations on the devoted heads of those miscreants in Massachusetts who machinated, advis'd, aided, abetted, or assisted in laying sacrilegious hands upon the most invaluable of all blessings, The Freedom

of the Press—that palladium of all the rights, privileges and immunities dear or sacred to any body of men.

Even more fervid was the language of Isaiah Thomas, as he announced his decision to substitute the *Worcester Magazine* for his “darling Spy.”

PRINTING OFFICE, Worcester, April 3d, 1786.

*To the Customers for Thomas's Massachusetts Spy,*  
KIND PATRONS,

The Publisher of the Massachusetts Spy was early in life engaged, in the way of his profession, in the service of his country. *Sixteen years* has now elapsed since he first published the Spy and he can with truth aver, that he has zealously and religiously endeavoured to support the cause he from choice engaged in, in the hour of its adversity and danger, as well as in the sunshine of its prosperity, nor have offers of emolument formerly made to him, when the Commonwealth was a colony of Britain *allured*—nor the threats and persecutions of a British Governor, when those offers were rejected—*deterred* him, from doing what he esteemed his duty. Many can testify that his services have, at times, been perilous; but his design is not to boast of those services—he has only to lament they were not better performed.

His intention at present is to inform you that to be obliged to stop the publication of the SPY by an oppressive Act, is like the parting of the dearest friends to meet no more!—to remind you that the Patriots of our Country, before, at, and since the Revolution until the passing the late Massachusetts Stamp Act, ever esteemed the Liberty of the Press, and held it up to view, as the most darling privilege of Freemen. The declaration which he has often published and in support of which he has suffered, he still believes to be true, or, like the

Father of the Patriarchs, he would not now offer for sacrifice, upon the altar of Liberty, his *darling* SPY.

This sentimental prologue is followed by more logical statements about the tax upon advertising, which "has a direct tendency not only to *restrain* but to *destroy* those necessary vehicles of public Information." The *Worcester Magazine*, he assures these "Kind Patrons," will be published every Thursday, "A Miscellaneous Pamphlet for the same price, 9 shillings unstitched, or 12 shilling stitched in blue paper and will be the cheapest work of its kind in the State." There was *no tax* upon advertisements in *magazines or books*, so, by this expediency, the printer showed his adroitness and maintained his subscribers and their support. A few publishers of newspapers accepted and paid the tax, or suspended their publications.

With delight in ironic humor and use of metaphors, Mr. Thomas lightened the seriousness of the tax and its consequence by expressing a hope "for a particular kind of court plaster which might be applied before mortification should set in and prove fatal." Reiterating his motto from Addison, he assured his patrons: "The Worcester Magazine will give its service until The Spy shall really expire or be able once more to rear its numerous stately columns for your service; and although it is not in the power of mortals to command success, I will endeavour to deserve it."

In his *History of Printing* he gives an accurate, restrained account of the origin of this tax on adver-

tisements.<sup>5</sup> In March, 1785, the legislature of Massachusetts had "passed an act imposing duties on licensed vellum, parchment and paper. This act laid a duty of two-thirds of a penny on newspapers and a penny on almanacks, which were to be stamped. The British Stamp Act of 1765, violently opposed in the colonies, rendered this act so unpopular from its very name, that the legislature was induced to repeal it before it went into operation. But, in the July following, another act was passed which imposed a duty on *all* advertisements inserted in the newspapers printed in this commonwealth. This act was thought by the publisher of the *Spy*, and by many others, to lay an improper restraint on the press. He therefore discontinued the *Spy* during the period that this act was in force, which was two years. But he published as a substitute a periodical work, entitled *The Worcester Weekly Magazine*, in octavo. The restoration of the *Spy* took place in April, 1788, and a motto was at that time introduced from the constitution of Massachusetts, viz.: "The Liberty of the Press is essential to the security of freedom.""

In the *Worcester Weekly Magazine* its readers of that day, and the research students of to-day, find the same kinds of "Intelligence" from leading places in this country and Europe, as were in the columns of the *Spy*. "The Poets' Corner" continued to furnish examples of the crude, "original" verses and dramatic dialogues that were widely read and reprinted at that

time. They are now completely forgotten or, with a very few exceptions, occasionally revived for pageants or historical programs. With the repeal of this tax on advertisements the *Spy* was resumed, with a cheerful editorial, using more symbolic language about the healing "plaster."

First-hand information regarding the material prosperity of Isaiah Thomas, in these after-war years, is found in two sources; one, his accounts for 1782 and 1783, preserved in the copies of his *Almanacks*; the other, a will which he made in 1784. From the former lists one reads that he was paying 13s. 4d. for "silk stockings," 3s. each for rags and a pig, 4s. 8d. for "starch soap," 2s. 6d. for sugar, and 6s 8d. for rum, 6s. for salt fish, 1s. 2d. for coffee and 1s. 8d. for chocolate, with larger bulk sums to such dealers in merchandise as "Salisbury," "Waldo" and "Mr. Snow."

His will, dated May 11, 1784, is one of several such documents; this chronicles for the reader the phraseology of that period, the members of his family at that time, and some of his resources:

My immortal Part, I most humbly recommend to the Great Author of Nature, the Sovereign Dispenser and Ruler of the Universe, ardently hoping that He will receive it, and permit it to dwell in the blissful mansions of Immortality.

I request that my body may be frugally interred and deposited, if in or within ten miles of Boston, in the family tomb of my Ancestors, in a fit condition; if not, in any other place at the Discretion of my Executor, hereafter to be named.

Item, To my honoured mother, Mrs. Mary Blackman, I give, during her life, my Farm in Lancaster, and the Buildings thereon, towards her support and maintenance. And after her decease I give to my daughter, Mary Ann Thomas and the Heirs of her body, lawfully begotten, said Farm and Buildings when she shall arrive at lawful age.

Item, I give to my much-esteemed mother-in-law, Mrs. Rebecca Fowle, the sum of £15, to purchase a suit of mourning.

Item, I give to Joshua, Jun<sup>r</sup>, son of my brother Joshua, when he shall arrive at the age of twenty-one years, one good suit of wearing apparel, over and above what he may be intitled to by his indentures and to him, at the age of 21, sum of £30.

This nephew, Joshua, was one of his apprentices in Worcester. To the lads apprenticed to him, in 1783 or later, he gives "a mourning ring each"; to his son, Isaiah Thomas, all his silver buckles and stone buckles, and to his daughter, Mary Ann, "sleeve buttons and things." To his wife, Mary Fowle Thomas, is left all the rest—"all my estate, real and personal, or mixed." When his son should reach the age of 21 he would share one-half of all his printing utensils and the other half would go to his wife, "as long as she is a widow and all lands in the State of Vermont, and Printing-Office and Book-Store in Worcester." At the decease of his wife, this latter property would go to his daughter.

Isaiah Thomas was destined to live for nearly a half-century after *this* will was made—and to make



many others. It is a register of his possessions and prospects less than ten years after his seemingly hopeless future as a printer in Worcester. The next ten years were to chronicle for him far greater prosperity and widespread influence.

## CHAPTER XI

### WIDENING INTERESTS IN BOSTON AND ELSEWHERE

THERE was some exaggeration in the statement recorded by the famous explorer, Brissot de Warville, when he passed through Worcester, in 1788, but it contained a large quota of truth: "This town is elegant and well-peopled; the printer, Isaiah Thomas, has rendered it famous throughout the continent of America. He has printed a great part of the works which appear; and it is acknowledged that his editions are correct and well-edited. He is the Didot of the United States."<sup>1</sup>

Probably the writer was entertained by Isaiah Thomas when he passed through Worcester and thus gained impressions of the large number of books which issued from the Thomas presses and the testimonials to the printer. With all due reservations, however, and tribute to rival printers, the fact is indisputable that Isaiah Thomas was gaining a reputation for promoting and publishing *fine* literature, as well as many volumes of ephemeral, mediocre type. Dr. Charles L. Nichols, whose study of Thomas was monumental—and the incentive to this biography—affirmed that, in actual number of imprints, Isaiah Thomas more than equaled those accredited to Hugh Gaine or Matthew Carey or even to Benjamin Franklin.

It was a custom of a generous master in the printing business, to assist his apprentices, when they had finished their indentures, to start presses of their own or go into partnership with others in older established shops. This custom was faithfully exemplified by Mr. Thomas in several instances. Among his most skilled apprentices in Worcester was Ebenezer Turell Andrews, the son of William and Mary Andrews of Boston. He had been well educated. He came to Worcester as apprentice in 1781 and remained until 1788. Much of the time he lived in the family of Mr. Thomas. Upon his associates he left an impression of a keen mind, genial disposition and a deep devotion to his "master." His letters show excellent business acumen yet deference to his "consulting partner." They give, also, items of family interest.

At first, the firm in Boston used "Thomas and Company" as their sign, with a monogram which was graceful and distinctive, as found in several of the early imprints. There was a third partner for a time, probably John Sprague. After a year, the insignia upon their books was "Thomas & Andrews. At Faust's Statue, no. 45 Newbury Street, Boston." Sometimes, the trademark took the form of a figure of Faust, leaning on a pedestal, as in the illustration which is found as frontispiece to their Catalogue of Books, 1793; more often it was an ornamental, much-reduced figure of Faust, enclosed in an elaborate scroll. Tradition reports that this "sign of Faust" was found earlier at the

Boston birthplace of Benjamin Franklin. Evidently, the error persisted of calling Johan Faust, or Fust (the banker-printer of Mainz in 1444), the "Inventor of Printing." It so appears in the Thomas & Andrews Catalogue of 1793, but on the margin Isaiah Thomas has written a correction. With his son-in-law, Faust first used metal types that were *cast*, not *cut*, as was the earlier method.

Ebenezer Andrews married Hermione Weld, of Boston, the same year that he entered into partnership with Thomas. She died within a brief time and he married her sister, Elizabeth Weld. Another sister of this socially influential family became the wife of Isaiah Thomas, Junior. The firm name of Thomas & Andrews was retained until August 12, 1820. A fine residence on Winter Street was the home of the Andrews family in later years.

When the Boston business was started, some types were brought from Worcester and more were ordered from Fry of London, as letters show. In 1789, the firm printed thirteen books; by 1791, the number had increased to twenty-nine, besides the imports. In 1792 there were "23 hands, including journeymen and boys"; the supervisor for many years was William Manning who became publisher of the *Massachusetts Spy*, in Worcester, in 1814.

One of the best sources of information regarding this period is *Personal Memoirs and Recollections of Editorial Life* by Joseph T. Buckingham:<sup>2</sup>

FAUST'S STATUE, No. 45, NEWBURY STREET.



*Just published,*

BY THOMAS & ANDREWS

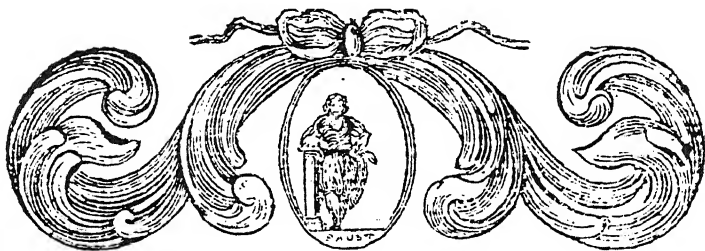
FAUST'S STATUE, No. 45, NEWBURY STREET, *Essex*.

A SELECTED CATALOGUE of some of the most esteemed PUBLICATIONS in the English Language. Proper to form a SOCIAL LIBRARY. With an INTRODUCTION upon the choice of Books.

By THADDEUS MASON HARRIS, A. M.

Librarian of HARVARD UNIVERSITY, and Author of "The NATURAL HISTORY of the Bible," and "A short and practical SYSTEM of PUNCTUATION."

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"AT THE SIGN OF FAUST'S STATUE," TWO FORMS OF  
THE INSIGNIA OF THOMAS AND ANDREWS



After three or four weeks I was transferred to the office of Thomas & Andrews which was then supposed to be the largest printing establishment in America. Five presses were kept continually in operation, which employed ten persons, and there were several apprentices and journeymen, who worked at *case* and *press*, as circumstances might demand. The whole business was conducted by William Manning, of the firm of Manning and Loring.

Among the apprentices in this office was *Hosea Sprague* of Boston. When his apprenticeship expired, the event was celebrated, according to general custom, by a "treat," at which some irregularities occurred, in consequence of a too bountiful supply of brandy, punch and wine. But this was not an uncommon *finis* to freedom treats.

In this same reminiscence by Mr. Buckingham we read the names of other apprentices to Thomas & Andrews—Thomas Edmands of Charlestown, and Joseph Cushing from Hingham. Among the journeymen were Ephraim W. Allen, Howard S. Robinson, Eliab W. Metcalf, and Chester Stebbins of Springfield who had finished his apprenticeship with Isaiah Thomas at Worcester. Mr. Buckingham continues:

In the spring of 1804 I contracted with Thomas & Andrews to carry on their printing business for a term of five years, at certain fixed prices. The prices allowed me but a small profit above the rate of journeyman's wages, but that small profit, added to the earnings of my labor at the *case*, enabled me at first to gain a decent livelihood. Before the term expired, I married and became a housekeeper.

There are a few side-lights from the *Almanack* records by Mr. Thomas, and more from letters to him

from Mr. Andrews, which reveal the expenses incurred and the difficulties met by these enterprising printers, from 1783 to 1793. To Evans & Co., the London book-sellers, Thomas was sending various amounts, one £101.1.3, in 1785; the same year he sent to Joseph Fry & Son, presumably for types, £103.16.7. There were "fat and lean years" in this printing business but the Boston publishing and book-store receipts mounted rather steadily until 1793 when the year's "balance of property in favor of the company"<sup>3</sup> was £5698.12.11 and, apparently, with an equal division, as Mr. Andrews reports as "your share £2848.6.5." By 1801, they were making their estimates in dollars, the business giving them \$142,000; in 1803, it had risen to \$184,000 and the peak seemed reached about 1804 with \$200,000. As the War of 1812 approached there was shrinkage of profits; in 1813 he suggested they had better sell their stock of books. Among the letters which gave information on this subject, Isaiah Thomas kept one from Littell & Henry of Philadelphia, dated June 24, 1819: an excerpt is here given:

"Booksellers have suffered so much in this city and in New York and to the South of us by auctions and by irregular persons who sold at large discounts at retail that for several years past fewer books have been printed, editions have been small, and a call for new ones has not been readily answered." It is interesting to note that conditions of book publishing and book selling, more than one hundred years ago, were fore-



casting what has been experienced in many economic crises since that time.

These "lean years," however, for Isaiah Thomas did not come until he had harvested well for himself, his partners and his family. In the year 1795 which may be called, as Dr. Charles L. Nichols has suggested, "the acme of his business prosperity, he had sixteen presses in constant motion (seven of them being in Worcester) and 150 hands employed in the various departments of his work in Worcester alone." Three hundred and forty-two titles of books from his Worcester presses may leave a few still unlisted. As suggested in the previous chapter, the publication of the *Laus Deo; or Worcester Collection of Sacred Harmony*, with the first edition, 1786, became a source of yearly profit. There was a "spurious," or pirated edition before the second genuine issue in 1787; in 1792 came the third edition; others followed in 1794, 1797, 1800 and 1803. On the last page of the edition of 1797 are advertised other "Musical Publications," printed by Thomas & Andrews, for the Use of Schools, Singing Societies, and Composers of Musick; viz.:

1. *The Union Harmony, or Musical Collection of Sacred Music*, in two vols. by Oliver Holden.
2. *Harmonia Americana, containing a concise Introduction to the Grounds of Music*, by Samuel Holyoke, A.B.
3. *The Rural Harmony*, being an Original Composition, in three and four Parts. For the Use of Singing Schools and Musical Societies by Jacob Kimball, Jun. A.B. *Note*; This is

a work of great merit, and stands first on the list of American original Musical Compositions. It is well calculated for a School Book, and every Encourager of American Music should become a purchaser.

4. *The Harmony of Maine*, being an Original Composition of Psalm and Hymn Tunes, by S. Belcher.

5. *The Continental Harmony*, By William Billings, Author of Various Musick Books.

6. *The Massachusetts Compiler of Theoretical and Practical Elements of Sacred Vocal Musick*. Together with a Musical Dictionary, and a Variety of Psalm Tunes, Choruses, Chiefly selected or adapted from Modern European Publications. By H. Gram, S. Holyoke and O. Holden. (Sells at 1 Doll. 75 cts.)

In spite of its cumbersome title and price, which was high for the times, this "compiler" proved to be one of the most popular books of the group.

From the Worcester press, in 1795, appeared two books with antithetical motives and contents. *Elegiac Sonnets and Other Poems by Charlotte Smith*; *The first Worcester edition from the sixth London edition, with additions* bore the imprint of Isaiah Thomas, 1795. By contrast, appeared what was probably the first book published by Isaiah Thomas, Jr., from the Worcester press; entitled, *The Skylark, or Gentlemen's and Ladies' Complete Songster, being a Collection of the most Modern and Celebrated American, English and Scotch Songs*, Worcester. "From the press of Isaiah Thomas, Jr. Sold at his bookstore and by the booksellers in Boston. 1795." The table of contents included such songs as:

"Adieu, ye verdant lawns and bowers"  
"A beauteous starling late I saw"  
"A cobbler there was and he lived in a stall"  
"Charming Village Maid"  
"I've kiss'd and I've prattled with fifty fair maids"  
"On Richmond Hill, there lives a lass"  
"I've lost my head to Teddy."

Isaiah Thomas, Jr., at this time was twenty years of age and, to him, his father had given some responsibility for printing the *Spy* and other work when the Boston business required so much of the time of the elder Thomas. Perhaps, by this comparison of the "Elegiac Sonnets," issued by his father, and the gay, rollicking "Songs" chosen by the younger for publication it may be realized that, before the nineteenth century began, there were "conflicts between the older and the younger generations."

There was nothing of the prig, however, in the nature or life of Mr. Thomas. He was one of the first in this country to reprint translations from the French: *Fanny; or the Happy Repentance*, an interesting and entrancing novel, from the French of M. d'Arnaud; and *The Beauty and the Monster: A Comedy* from the French of the Countess de Genlis. While these books were "ethical," and sometimes pietistic, it indicated a progressive spirit to reprint and offer them for sale; the same was true regarding such books, advertised by Isaiah Thomas and Thomas & Andrews, in the 1790's as: *Beauties of Sterne; including all his pathetick tales*

and most distinguished observations on life, selected for the heart of sensibility; *The celebrated Poems and Works of Robert Burns*; *The Night Cap*, from the French of M. Mercier (2 vols.); and *The Pupil of Pleasure* by Courtney Melmoth (2 vols.). On the same contemporaneous list are such books of once popular American patriot-writers as John Trumbull's *M'Fingal*, and the *Life of General Israel Putnam* by Col. David Humphreys, and a collection of the *Poems* by this same aide of Washington, and later diplomat, who was once ranked among the "Hartford Wits" and promising writers of America. When George Washington died, the firm of Thomas & Andrews printed, with a black border, *Sacred Dirges, Hymns and Anthems, Commemorative of the Death of General George Washington, the Guardian of his Country and the Friend of Man*. Isaiah Thomas dated his copy, now in the American Antiquarian Society, 1800. Among the Elegies was "A Dirge," words by Mrs. Rowson of Medford, and "Mount Vernon: A Solo," that was sung for many years.

For five years after Isaiah Thomas and Ebenezer Andrews began publishing books in Boston, they issued also, *The Massachusetts Magazine*. It averaged about sixty-four pages, with one page of music (words and tune) and two or more full-page copperplate engravings. Copies sold, at first, for one shilling each. It had the slogan, "A magazine is the nursery of literary expression." This "nursery," however, did not grow into lusty development. The cost exceeded the

profits. Andrews reported that in 1792, of 800 magazines, 100 were imperfect "and had to be given away." The actual loss for a year was £110.10.0. Seventy-five pounds was paid to the editors, Ezra W. Weld, William Greenough and Samuel Hill.

At the end of 1793, the Magazine was sold to these editors. The departments of this Magazine included "Poetry, Musick, Biography, History, Physick, Geography, Morality, Criticism, Philosophy, Mathematics, Agriculture, Architecture, Chemistry, Novels, Tales, News, Marriages, Deaths, Meteorological Observations, &c." Could there possibly be any others?

There were two pages of music in each issue, often by Hans Gram, organist. William Dunlap's play, *The Father*, was here in two numbers of Volume I. Joseph Dennie carried on "a conventional literary courtship" with Mrs. Sarah Wentworth Apthorp Morton, who wrote as "Philenia"; Judith Murray, wife of a minister, wrote "The Gleaner" with the pen-name of "Constantia."<sup>4</sup>

The cause of so many defective magazines, and consequent losses, was due to poor workmanship. Evidently Thomas often chided his young partner and urged the workmen to study certain models of good printing. In reply, Andrews writes to Thomas (January, 1792): "The devil seems to have got into journeymen, they want more than one shilling per token and I expect the next thing will be more than one shilling per thousand M's. In fact, as workmen are scarce they seem

determined to take advantage of it, and if I could do without them I would let them go." Thus early was there "conflict between capital and labor."

As booksellers, this same firm was meeting sharp competition from other places, especially New York, Philadelphia and Hartford. In the diary of Isaiah Thomas are references to trips which he made to these places on business. Mr. Andrews stressed the fact that there was increasing demand for American books; to a "new book-seller" he offered to sell American books twenty per cent below retail and English books, eighteen below, but there would be no reductions on Irish and Scotch books because "there was no call for them."

Much correspondence between Thomas and the firm of Hudson & Goodwin of Hartford referred to the Webster Spelling Book and Grammar and the adjustment of "accounts." In 1791, Thomas & Andrews purchased the exclusive rights to print all three parts of Webster's "Institute" in Massachusetts, Newhampshire (so spelled) and Rhode Island for a term of fourteen years. To control competition they sold to dealers, "out of the state," the Hudson & Goodwin edition for 5*d*, holding their edition for 7*d* to supply Massachusetts; Andrews credits Thomas with "sound business principles." The letters, now in the New York Historical Society, written by Isaiah Thomas to the Hartford firm and to Nathaniel Patten of the same town, are long and convincing.

There is a tone of depression in one of these letters to Hudson & Goodwin, dated Worcester, May 28th, 1790.<sup>5</sup>

GENTLEMEN,

I am exceedingly sorry that your dispute with Mr. Patten could not have had an agreeable termination.

It appears to me that he is wrong—his last advertisement seems to be tinctured with phrensy—It clearly, I think, discovers the features of Revenge and I am sorry to see it.

When you may be successful in procuring subscribers for the Bible, I expect to begin it, but with a heavy heart, in about 2 months.

As another means of advertising and selling the books published by Thomas & Andrews, Joshua Thomas opened, in 1793, a circulating library opposite the Treasurer's Office in Boston. This was announced in the *Independent Chronicle*, June 27, 1793, with the assurance that the Library "will be constantly supplied with the newest and most approved Publications; Great pains will be taken to render this Library worthy of the patronage of the Ladies of *Boston* and its vicinity."

Gradually Thomas was opening bookstores in other places. In 1784, the firm of Thomas, Andrews & Butler, which survived until 1803, was selling books in Baltimore; Thomas, Andrews & Penniman was the firm name in Albany; and Thomas & Waldo in Brookfield. In 1796, Thomas chose Walpole, New Hampshire, as the best site for a bookstore and for a weekly newspaper

which was to bring to him, and to its contributors, remembrance in American literature.

David Carlisle, a native of Walpole, had been an apprentice of Isaiah Thomas at Worcester. With the same desire to foster intelligent ambition that the "master" had shown to Ebenezer Andrews, he offered to Carlisle an opportunity to become manager of a printing press in Walpole. In 1793, in April, with types and presses furnished by Thomas, the newspaper (first entitled *New Hampshire Journal*) was published at Walpole. A year later it was called *The New Hampshire and Vermont Journal, or Farmer's Weekly Museum*. The second part of the title became more familiar. From the first this journal seemed to find response. There had been a short-lived newspaper, started in February, 1781—the first in Vermont—published at Westminster and entitled *The Vermont Gazette; or Green Mountain Post-Boy*. This was issued on Mondays for less than three years by Judah Spooner and Timothy Green. "In 1810, there were not less than fourteen newspapers in this state, which forty years before was an uncultivated wilderness." 6

One reason for the popularity of the *Farmer's Museum* and its sustained reputation in literature, was the unusual merit of its contributors and the clever, witty tone of much of the paper. Most famous of all was the column of "The Lay Preacher." Joseph Denie, born in Boston in 1768, was educated at Harvard where he had some difficulties because of absence and



was "rusticated" at the home of the Reverend Mr. Chaplin of Groton; he wrote: "I lost my tutor and found a friend. It was like the exchange of armor between Glaucus and Diomedes; it was brass for gold."<sup>7</sup> His mother was the daughter of Bartholomew Green, Jr., the Boston printer. She understood the restless nature of her son and hoped he might become a journalist. Rejecting the suggestion that he should study for the ministry, Dennie studied law in the office of Mr. West of Charlestown, New Hampshire. He supplemented this study by reading the liturgy and "lay sermons" at the Episcopal Church there, "for four months as a Reader at the rate of 24 shillings per Sunday."

His fine voice and facility with words made him a victim of many advisors that he should "drop law and become a minister." Like many another speaker and writer of his time he imitated Pope, in his affluent words, and Swift, in his satire. While he was in Charlestown he wrote to his mother: "I am now worth 416 dollars, clear and unencumbered. I enjoy a high station on the rock of independence, unscared, as Pope says, by the specter of poverty, and I hope I shall be able to walk through life without a crutch."<sup>8</sup>

Before he left Charlestown Joseph Dennie had begun his contributions to Thomas & Carlisle's paper in Walpole. He had a series of witty essays entitled "The Farrago"; he also wrote for a column, known as "The Dessert," in this same paper. Some of these sketches were reprinted in the *Boston Centinel*. For a few

months he was persuaded to return to Boston and to be one of the editors of a small sheet, *The Tatler*, which survived from May 19th to August 11, 1795. Back in New Hampshire, he formed a cordial friendship with Royall Tyler, then practicing law at Brattleboro, Vermont. Tyler was writing for the *Farmer's Museum* and other papers under the pen-name of "From the Shop of Colon and Spondee." Tyler was capable of much better writing than light humor and sentimental verses, as he had shown in his drama, "The Contrast." These two friends were unlike in appearance and disposition; Tyler was serious and prompt; Dennie was gay and casual, "with befrizzled earlocks, pea-green coat, silk stockings, shoes with huge buckles and generous bows."<sup>9</sup>

In 1796 Dennie became the editor of the *New Hampshire and Vermont Journal; or Farmer's Museum*. He gave to it a unique quality, serving up "Intelligence" in witty form, encouraging political lampoons by "Simon Spunkey" (T. G. Fessenden) and sketches by "The Meddler" and "The Hermit." Dennie organized a Club in the town which included some of the neighbors, like Tyler, Jeremiah Mason, and Roger Vose, a member of Congress. There were excellent articles about American authors and a good summary of foreign news each week. This journal had its ebb and flow of financial success. In December, 1797, its editor, wrote: "The constant swell of our subscription book suggests a theme for our gratitude, and a

motive to our industry. The *Farmer's Museum* is read by more than *two thousand* individuals and has its patrons in Georgia and on the banks of the Ohio."

Not so optimistic was Isaiah Thomas about the *steady* success of this Walpole venture. It has seemed strange that he gave very little space to this journal, and its editor, Dennie (who had achieved a literary reputation of note) when he wrote his *History of Printing*. He said once that he had "borne its losses from three failures within a few years." Dennie often made appeals for payment of overdue subscriptions, saying, "Like every other industrious workman, he [editor] has a right to *bread*, and sometimes, to write all cheerily, he ought to have wine." Sometimes Dennie was criticized, both in Vermont and in Philadelphia, where he went later to edit the *Portfolio*, for his too convivial habits. J. T. Buckingham has recalled *his* experiences as an apprentice boy, for sixteen years, in the office of the *Farmer's Museum* when he was expected to "treat," saying, "I spent more than half the small amount of money I possessed for brandy, wine, sugar, eggs and crackers."

For a brief time, in the spring of 1797, Dennie left the journal in care of Alexander Thomas and went to Boston. Upon his return, he wrote one of his wittiest "Lay Sermons," from the text, "Here am I, for thou didst call me." In 1796, appeared from the Walpole press, of Thomas & Carlisle, the first volume of *The Lay Preacher or Short Sermons for Idle Readers*.

Dennie sought election to Congress but lost; he gained a place as private secretary to Timothy Pickering, then Secretary of State, before he returned to his journalistic work in Philadelphia.<sup>10</sup> Soon after Dennie left Walpole, there was published, in 1801, *The Spirit of the Farmer's Museum and Lay Preacher's Gazette* (Walpole), Carlisle; printer for Thomas & Thomas. Another collection of his *Lay Sermons* was arranged by John E. Hall and published in Philadelphia, 1817. Many studies of Dennie have been written and published in recent years. An amusing *contretemps* between this witty and convivial "Lay Preacher" and the serious, rigid Timothy Dwight when president of Yale, is narrated at length in Rufus Griswold's *Curiosities of Literature*.<sup>11</sup> It is to be feared that Isaiah Thomas did *not* respond to the facetious wit of Dennie.

The book-store at Walpole was one of the profitable investments because the readers of the *Farmer's Museum* were influenced to buy books recommended by Dennie. Another place where, for a time, a book-store thrived was at Windsor, Vermont (1808), with the firm name of Thomas & Merrifield. More ventures were at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, with name of Thomas & Tappan, and other stores at Rutland, Vermont, and Portland, Maine. As early as 1773-1774, Isaiah Thomas was sharing a partnership in Newburyport with his Boston colleague, as Thomas & Tinges. In addition to his paper mill at Worcester, he had interests in such a mill at Alstead, New Hampshire,

from 1813 to 1818. He had more than a commercial goal in these ventures; he wished to extend to readers, and to all the homes of America, educational opportunities of many kinds, especially by means of text-books.

Rev. Jedediah Morse, of Charlestown, was one of the pioneer writers, with his *Geography Made Easy*, designed for American teachers and scholars. With him, Isaiah Thomas had much correspondence. On the margin of a letter from Thomas to Morse (now at the New York Historical Society) is the penciled comment, "a tart note." It was an answer, by the printer, to insinuations by the minister-author that Thomas had been "artful and disingenuous." The latter \* merits quotation in full: it was dated from Worcester, February 17, 1792.

SIR,

Although I am this moment about setting off for Boston, I cannot forbear informing you that I have receiv'd your Letter of the 15th inst—I am happy, Sir, that you are so good a warrior as not to be frightened at the contents of my last Letter—had you been I should have been sorry; for, believe me, *that* was not my *object*.

You will permit me to write that I *think* you ought to have *better ground* for accusing me of *artifice* and *disingenuousness* than anything that I can recollect will appear in my obnoxious Letter.

You, Sir, have an undoubted right to think as you please—but if you *really* suppose that I would take any extra pains to do your work, even on the terms we offered to do it for, you *are* mistaken—of this I can easily convince you—perhaps, Sir,

\* By permission of New York Historical Society.

had I been more reserved, you might, hereafter, have had more ground for your accusations.

Somehow, the fire of resentment does not rise very high just now, at your reflections—it may be because they [crossed out] I do not deserve them. Hitherto, Sir, I have ever endeavoured to treat you with politeness—with honour—I have respected you—I wish ever to do the same. *My* Letter 'left an unfavourable impression on your mind'—*yours* has not made a favourable one on mine.

I am, Sir, your very humble  
Se<sup>vt</sup>

ISAIAH THOMAS.

In haste—Stage at the Door.

Rev. Mr. Morse.

What temerity it showed to write such a letter as that to a *minister of the gospel* before 1800!

There is a sequel to this letter, in one from Andrews to Thomas, dated May 12, 1793, with the statement: "If Morse was as attentive to writing and correcting his works as he was to making money out of the sale of them, our anxieties would have been less." By arrangement with Morse, who sold to Thomas & Andrews the copyright of his *Geography Made Easy*, in 1790, the printers were to have five per cent of all the profits. This book followed his *American Geography*, published by Shepard Kollock, at Elizabethtown, New Jersey, in 1789. The new edition of his second book, issued by Thomas & Andrews, had 332 pages and eight plates, made by Doolittle. Nineteen editions of *Geography Made Easy* were printed by Thomas & Andrews. In 1793, they brought out, also, the *American Universal*

Worcester, Feb. 17<sup>th</sup> 1792

Sir,

Although I am this moment about setting off for Boston, I cannot forbear informing you that I have received your Letter of the 14<sup>th</sup> inst. — I am happy, Sir, that you are so good a warrior as not to be "frightened" at the Contents of my last Letter — had you have been, I should have been sorry, for, believe me, that was not my object.

You will permit me to write, that I think you ought to have had better ground for accusing me of "artifice" and "disingenuousness" than any thing that I can recollect will appear in my obnoxious Letter. — You, Sir, have an undoubted right to think as you please — but if you really suppose that I would take any extra pains to do your work, even on the terms we offered to do it for, you are mistaken — of this I can safely convince you — perhaps, Sir, had I have been more beloved, you might hereafter, have had more ground for your accusations. — I sometimes, the glow of repentment does not rise very high just now at your reflections — it may be, because they I do not deserve them. — I assure, Sir, I have ever endeavoured to treat you with politeness — with honour — I have respected you — I wish ever to do the same. — My Letter "left an unfavourable impression on your mind" — Yours has not made a favourable one on mine. I am, Sir, your very humble ser<sup>vt</sup>

In haste &c. as the Door.  
Rev. Mr. Morse.

Isaiah Thomas





*Geography*, in two volumes, with seven plates by Doolittle, Seymour & J. Allen.

Detailed accounts of the cost of this *Geography* are supplied, giving later students data on prices of material and labor:

32 reams of paper for 3000 at 15s.....	£242.15.0
Expense of printing .....	£400.0.0
Seven new maps and impressions and other expenses, specified or suggested .....	£120.0.0
with this summary of Total Cost for Thomas & Andrews for 3000 Geog- raphies in sheets of 800 pages, at 8 shillings .....	£1200.0.0

The price was changed to 16s, as the estimate of cost was incorrect. In 1805, this firm issued the fifth edition with an additional volume giving the general map of the world and 63 quarto maps, "with the latest revisions," at seven dollars for three volumes. The usual number of an edition, at that time, was 10,000 copies. The eleventh edition of the abridgment, in 1808, consisted of 20,000 copies. It was good news when Andrews could tell his partner that their "profits exceeded three times their estimates."

Two other educators who favored the firm of Thomas & Andrews and brought them substantial returns were Caleb Bingham and Jeremy Belknap. Bingham, a teacher in Boston, chose a title which has provoked a smile from modern readers: *The Young Lady's Accidence, or a Short & Easy Introduction to English*

*Grammar, Designed principally, for the use of Young Learners, more especially those of the Fair Sex though proper for Either*, by Caleb Bingham, A.M. The Fourth Edition, corrected 1790. Printed at Boston, 24 mo, 57 pp." Among other books of that year, 1790, printed in Boston was "*Memoirs of the Blooms Grove Family. In a Series of Letters to a Respectable Citizen of Philadelphia, Containing Sentiments on a Mode of Domestic Education suited to the Present State of Society, Government, and Manners, and on the Dignity and Importance of the Female Character. Interspersed with a Variety of Interesting Anecdotes*, by Enos Hitchcock, D.D." Apparently "female education" was beginning to agitate the country. Toward the "reformation" of the older, negative ideas on this subject, Caleb Bingham spoke and wrote most earnestly. He must have felt rewarded when, in 1789, the educational plan of Boston provided that "Caleb Bingham be made the head of the whole system, that private schools be abolished and that girls be admitted on an equality with boys—that three new schools be added to the writing schools already in operation, that they be called reading schools and that in them be taught reading, spelling, grammar and, perhaps geography." Caleb Bingham later gave up teaching and had a bookstore on Cornhill. In 1794, Thomas & Andrews published for him *The American Preceptor*; this book remained in demand until sixty-four editions of 10,000 each had been issued.

The minister, Reverend Jeremy Belknap, sold to

Thomas & Andrews the copyright of his tale *The Foresters*, in 1792, and a second edition was published in 1796. He was versatile but less permanent in his reputation. The two volumes of Belknap's *American Biography* and his *Sacred Poetry* were publications of Thomas & Andrews, which sold well in the 1790's and early 1800's. A letter, written by Isaiah Thomas to Mr. Belknap, is among the Thomas Papers:

WORCESTER, Jan'y 13th, 1797.

TO REV. DR. BELKNAP,

SIR,

Your favour of the 29th inst. I received a few days since.

I am very happy the little book I sent you found a welcome. It can claim no superior excellence—it only exhibits a feature that may be improved and points to what may be done, with caution, should proper encouragement be given to the arts and manufactures of this country.

I join you in opinion that a collection of the best American Poetry, printed in a truly handsome stile, would be pleasing to persons of taste, and would probably meet encouragement. But it is almost too late in the day for me to undertake anything of the kind. I thank you most cordially for your good wishes and wish you permanent felicity,

With esteem and respect,

Sir, yr. humble servant,

ISAIAH THOMAS.

This gracious letter indicates two facts about the work and feelings of its author, as the new century drew near. The first is the evident appreciation of the fine craftsmanship that Thomas had attained in his printing. The second impression is that of his caution in projecting

new forms of literature until he was sure of their acceptance.

A mystery has never been fully solved which hangs over the publication, by his Boston firm, of what has been generally called the first American novel, *The Power of Sympathy or the Triumph of Nature* (2 vols). "Printed at Boston by Isaiah Thomas and Company, Sold at their Bookstore, no. 45 Newbury Street and at said Thomas's Bookstore in Worcester. MDCCLXXXIX." For scores of years the authorship of this first novel, in form of letters, was assigned to Mrs. Sarah Wentworth Apthorp Morton, the wife of Hon. Perez Morton. It is dull reading but the story of its probable incentive and its real authorship is that of a strange romance. In these later days, due to careful and convincing study by Milton Ellis and Emily Pendleton, the facts about the writer of this tale have been revealed.<sup>12</sup>

The weight of evidence is that the novel, so-called, was written by a man, probably William Hill Brown, who wrote poetry, plays and romantic tales like "Harriot, or the Domestic Reconciliation," which was published in the first issue of the *Massachusetts Magazine*, January, 1789, and *Ira and Isabella*, printed in 1807. The resemblances in vocabulary and spelling, as in plot, to similar features of *The Power of Sympathy* are noticeable. Moreover, the verse on the title-page of the first novel indicates masculine authorship in its couplet: (*italics are not in the book*)

Fain would *he* strew Life's thorny Way with Flowers,  
And open to your View Elysian Bowers.

More effective, as an argument against the authorship by Mrs. Morton, is the indisputable fact that one of the episodes in this tale, "Founded upon Truth," the story there of Ophelia and Martin, was a recital, with feigned names, of the scandal which involved the immediate family of Mrs. Morton—namely, the suspicion that her husband was the seducer of her sister, Frances Apthorp, who bore a child and then committed suicide by drinking poison. The frontispiece of the first edition of this novel was a crude illustration of Ophelia in the act of drinking "the Fatal Poison." That Mrs. Morton should have written this story, within a few months after the tragic episode, is unthinkable. She suffered with other members of her family—perhaps more than any other—and for a time she was estranged from her husband, as she revealed in her verses on their reunion. Hon. Perez Morton, graduate of the Class of 1771, which had given the printing of their Theses to Isaiah Thomas, was a man of high rank in political and social circles in Boston. He was "exonerated" from the charge against him (of this alleged adultery, or seduction) by John Adams and Governor Bowdoin, the committee of investigation.<sup>13</sup> A scurrilous skit, "Occurrences of the Times," attacked Morton's reputation. So disturbed, however, was the family that all copies of that first edition, that could be secured, were bought and few were for sale until its reprint in

1894 in *The Bostonian*. A dozen fresh copies, with leaves uncut, found in an old truck in 1867, revived interest in the book and story. Isaiah Thomas sent two copies to Matthew Carey of Philadelphia but he must have lost much money on the publication, unless he was well reimbursed by the Apthorp and Morton families.

Mr. Ellis bases his strongest argument for the authorship by William Hill Brown upon the memory of Brown's niece, Mrs. Rebecca Valentine Thompson, that she had been told this version by Brown's mother. The latter was sure that Catherine Byles, daughter of the minister, Rev. Mather Byles of the Hollis Street Church, knew that Brown was writing this tale and perhaps collaborated with him. They were close friends and neighbors of the Apthorps and Mortons. According to this reminiscence, Mrs. Apthorp said to Mrs. Brown: "Oh, why did Willy do such a thing when we were such good friends?" and his mother replied, "The names are fictitious." "Yes," was the rejoinder, "but everybody knows whom he means." Brown was a writer with a dramatic imagination. His play, "West Point," founded on the death of Major André, was performed at Haymarket Theater. He died as a young man. In a contemporary mention of the book, in *The Herald of Freedom*, Boston, February, 1789, there is an allusion to the "reputed author" as "an amiable youth."

Mrs. Morton was a poet, so-called, in her own day and a woman of beauty and social charm. Three por-

traits of her by Gilbert Stuart, one unfinished but considered the best in technique (in the Worcester Art Museum) are familiar. She contributed many long poems to the *Massachusetts Magazine*. In 1790, Thomas & Andrews published her metrical story, *Ouâbi; or the Virtues of Nature. An Indian Tale*, in Four Cantos, by Philenia, a Lady of Boston. Many of her verses were signed either by her sentimental pen-name, "Philenia," or as "A Lady of Boston." Rare now is the collection of her thoughts in prose and verse, entitled *My Mind and My Thoughts*, Boston, 1823.

A chance reference to her Indian Tale, *Ouâbi*, is found in the recently edited and published *Diary of William Dunlap*, pioneer American dramatist.<sup>14</sup> He had been reading this work by Mrs. Morton (while he was in Boston and "still writing André") and declared, "it has given me more pleasure than I expected." (Dec. 14th, 1797.) His surprise may have been because he had bought the same lady's *Beacon Hill*, "the 1st Quarto, 62½ cents," at the same time buying Royall Tyler's *Algerine Captives*. "Read 'Beacon Hill.' I was disappointed with ye beginning but afterwards found much to admire." A question regarding the "character" of Mrs. Morton seems to have been raised while Dunlap was in Boston. "Miss Morton tells me Mrs. Morton is not much respected in private life." He narrates that his landlady, Mrs. Brown, "Gives good character of Mrs. Morton as an amiable domestic woman, her husband is Perez Morton,

a lawyer & a democrat. Samuel Cooper laughs at his talking so much of himself at his house & attributes it to the wine. This same Mrs. Brown praised Mrs. Morton as a very clever woman.”<sup>15</sup>

Another woman writer, whose name has been honored for her patriotism and her dramatic efforts, Mistress Mercy Warren, sister of James Otis and wife of General James Warren, was chosen by Thomas & Andrews for one of their authors, in 1790. They published her *Poems, Dramatic and Miscellaneous* in a volume with ornament and two lines from *Pope*. On the list of books of this same year is one with arresting title, by Dr. Benjamin Rush, professor in the University of Philadelphia: *An Inquiry into the Effects of Spiritous Liquors on the Human Body, To which is added, A Moral and Physical Thermometer*. The “physical thermometer” has seemed to survive the “moral” testing-tube.

In the letter already quoted to Rev. Jeremy Belknap there was a suggestion that Isaiah Thomas began to feel wearied at times by the vast amount of work and responsibility which he had undertaken during these years, near the close of the eighteenth century. He felt the need of conserving his energy and time for he had already, in mind, the life work to which he had dedicated his ambition—to write a history of printing in America and to form some society to which he could give his collections of newspapers and books, as a permanent foundation for the use of scholars.



To travel back and forth from Worcester to Boston, with the outside trips which he made every year to his other book-stores and associates, was a burden that he decided to lift, at least for a few years. Each trip to Boston, especially when he was accompanied by Mrs. Thomas and other members of his family, cost him much time and money. An occasional entry in his Diary reads "fifteen pounds for expenses" of his wife and himself to Boston, and three days there. It would be economy of time and strength, perhaps even of money, to have a home in Boston during these years of his active interests there in business, Masonic circles and social organizations. Such a plan would give his family wider social opportunities.

He left his house in Worcester in charge of other members of his large household, with servants, so that this would be kept open at all times for his return or to show hospitality to visitors. In 1802 he bought the house at 52 Newbury Street, near his book-store at number 48 of the same street. This was his Boston home until 1808. In the latter year he sold it to Mr. Andrews for \$16,000. In one entry he says, "It needed many repairs." In another comment, after the sale, he adds, "but I regretted I had sold it." Amid so many details about his business and technicalities of publishing, it is relaxing to find a list of the articles which he and Mrs. Thomas purchased for their Boston home in 1802; they must have had a busy shopping-day. Perhaps he applied the recipe, recorded in one of his

*Almanacks*, "for a good night's sleep; tea to drink at going to bed; sage and saffron."

The list of their purchases is too long to be given here but a few items may suggest the variety and tastes of the new owners:

1 market basket; 1 old bedstead; 1 coffee mill; 2 waiters; 1 Holy Bible [one queries why he did not use one of his own fine Folios]; 2 dining-tables; 1 china tureen; 5 dozen large and small china plates; 1 set elegant glass casters; 1 pair ditto salts; 2 elegant pictures of Cain and Abel [spelled Able]; 6 wine glasses; 2 tin pans; 4 stone jugs; 2 candlesticks; 1 elegant plated coffee pot; 1 dozen more chairs; 5 pairs new sheets; 1 pair decanters; 3 dozen wine glasses; 1 pair Blankets; 3 large carpets; 5 bedsteads; 3 feather beds; 5 looking-glasses; 1 sideboard; 3 bureaus; 4 card tables; 3 dozen and a half chairs; 1 set tea china; 1 chafing-dish; 1 gridiron; 1 large Tea Tray and Waiter; 4 dozen china plates and 6 dishes.

According to the diagram and information, found in Miss Annie Thwing's *The Crooked and Narrow Streets of the Town of Boston*, the book-store and home of Isaiah Thomas, at 48 and 52 Newbury Street at that time, would be in what is now Washington Street, between West and Essex Streets.<sup>16</sup>

## CHAPTER XII

### HONORABLE SERVICE TO FREE MASONRY

**A**N historical memento, treasured among the Thomas Papers,<sup>1</sup> is a letter in the handwriting of Paul Revere, which has a dual interest. It is a model of penmanship and brevity; it gives definite information about Masonic activity by Isaiah Thomas. Here is the text:

Boston, Nov. 12, 1795

BROTHER THOMAS

I embrace this opportunity to acquaint you that the Grand Lodge will go to Framingham the Wednesday after Thanksgiving, to constitute the Lodge there. I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you there. I expect a number of Masons will go from Boston. I shall endeavor to be there by 11 o'clock.

Yours affectionately,

PAUL REVERE.

This letter, written when Revere was sixty years of age and Thomas fourteen years younger, was chronicle of another link in the chain of associations of these two men. When Isaiah Thomas was a young, fiery printer he found inspiration for his patriotic zeal in the examples of Paul Revere, John Hancock, Dr. Joseph Warren; in turn, through the columns of his *Massachusetts Spy*, he spread wider paths for their influence.

With Paul Revere the friendship, thus formed, ripened into a lifelong affection between the designer and silversmith on one side, and the journalist and publisher on the other.

The first Grand Lodge of Masons in London was constituted in 1717; by 1730 Lodges were starting in America. The first Grand Lodge of Masons in Massachusetts was erected in Boston, in 1733, under "a Commission received from Right Honourable and Most Worshipful Anthony, Lord Viscount Montague, Grand Master of Masons in England, who appointed Right Worshipful Henry Price, Provincial Grand Master of New England." On July 30th of that year a Grand Lodge was formed under the name of St. John's Grand Lodge. In response to the petition of several "worthy bretheren in Boston, praying to be constituted into a regular Lodge," the request was granted and the lodge was called The First Lodge in Boston, or St. John's Lodge. The following year Benjamin Franklin, "and several bretheren residing in Philadelphia," asked to have a Lodge constituted there; when "the prayer was granted and a deputation sent," Right Worshipful Benjamin Franklin was appointed their First Master.

In 1752, a second lodge in Boston under title of St. Andrew's Lodge, No. 81, was granted in response to the application to the Grand Lodge of Scotland; the Dispensations came from Sholto Charles Douglas, Lord Aberdour, then Grand Master. There was friction for a time between St. John's Lodge and St. Andrew's Lodge.

The latter grew successfully and there was a desire to have an Ancient Grand Lodge established in the Province of Massachusetts Bay. In May, 1769, responding to a request, Right Honorable and Most Worshipful George, Earl of Dalbouf, Grand Master of Masons in Scotland, appointed Joseph Warren, Esq., to be Grand Master of Masons in Boston "and within one hundred miles of the same." Three years later, he was reappointed and his "jurisdiction was extended to cover the Continent of America." This must have been an event of much satisfaction to Paul Revere and his Sons of Liberty.

After the evacuation of Boston by the British, the members of the Grand Lodge of Boston decided to have the body of their dead hero and Master, Joseph Warren, removed from the hastily-made grave on Bunker Hill to a churchyard where it could have proper burial. It has been affirmed that Paul Revere identified the body of Warren by the dental work which he had done for him. A procession was formed and the remains of the soldier-hero were escorted from the State House to the Stone Chapel (now King's Chapel) where an eulogy was given by the Honorable Perez Morton, one of their number. It requires no strain of the imagination to place Isaiah Thomas within the group that gathered on the heights of Charlestown, in 1794, when a monument to the memory of Warren was dedicated by the Society of Freemasons. At that time Thomas was already honored by Masonic rank in

both the state and the town of Worcester, as will be noted in this chapter.

As "the commission of the Grand Master of the Boston Lodge" died with Joseph Warren, and there was no power to convene the Grand Lodge, a new, "Independent Grand Lodge was formed, March eighth, 1777, known as the Massachusetts Grand Lodge of Masons." Joseph Webb was its Grand Master. From this time charters were granted to subordinate lodges. Conflict seemed to develop, however, and the Committee appointed, in 1783, "to consider the powers and prerogatives of an Independent Grand Lodge" reported: "In the history of our Craft, we find that in England there are two Grand Lodges independent of each other; in Scotland, the same, and in Ireland, their Grand Masters are independent either of England or Scotland. It is clear that the authority of some of their Grand Lodges originated in assumption, or otherwise they would acknowledge the head from which they derived."

In spite of this report, which seemed to favor the plan of Great Britain and intimated that two Grand Lodges might coexist without friction in New England, there was dissatisfaction and lack of harmony in Massachusetts. In 1792, therefore, a committee was selected from each Lodge to see "if a complete union of two Grand Lodges could not be consummated." After repeated conferences, "distinguished by impartiality, liberality and candor, the union was happily effected.

The two Grand Lodges assembled for the last time in their respective halls, March 5, 1792, and on the same date, the new Grand Lodge was organized under the title of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts.”<sup>2</sup>

It has been surmised that Isaiah Thomas had joined the lodge of Masons of which Joseph Warren was Grand Master, during the last year of his first period of residence in Boston and just before he moved his press and newspaper to Worcester. When he came to his adopted town to live, after the two years of domestic and financial trials away from Worcester, there was no lodge of Masons yet formed in this place. The first Worcester lodge was not constituted until 1793. There was, however, a lodge at Lancaster, Trinity Lodge (now at Clinton) which was holding meetings in January, 1778. He probably joined here and often attended meetings.

Thomas was running his “last lap” on the race for victory for his *Massachusetts Spy* in this year, 1778-1779. Although his paper varied in quality and size of the sheet, the columns of his newspaper were well supplied with “Intelligence.” The publisher was winning attention not only in Worcester but in the surrounding towns, some of them larger and wealthier than his home-town, as we have noted. Among these places of influence and responsiveness was Lancaster. It had a population of 2,746, in 1776. Joshua Thomas, the older brother of Isaiah, was one of the postriders for the *Spy*, as has been mentioned, and his route took him through

Lancaster and Groton on his way to Londonderry and farther north.

Isaiah Thomas had thought of moving his press and paper to Lancaster from Worcester, if the latter place failed to give him encouragement and more financial backing. In Lancaster, were mills and a pottery, merchants and farmers, who appreciated the *Spy*. Although he remained in Worcester, Isaiah Thomas purchased a farm in Lancaster, near what is now the Bolton line, and here his brother, Joshua, lived for many years. To the lodge of Masons, Trinity Lodge, the printer of the *Spy* was welcomed as a fellow-Mason; before this Lodge he delivered one of his Orations which has been preserved. This was in 1780. A note of this occasion was mentioned in the *Spy* and the Oration was published as a pamphlet: "An Oration Delivered in Free Mason's Hall, Lancaster, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, on Thursday, the Twenty-fourth of June, 1780 (A. L. 5780). To the Right Worshipful Master and Worshipful Wardens and Members of Trinity Lodge by Brother Isaiah Thomas. Printed at Worcester, 1781. Published at the Request of the Bretheren."

The opening sentences of this oration seem over-modest, in comparison with most of the utterances, in print, by Isaiah Thomas but they are expressions of his sincere appreciation of the honor which the Grand Lodge was bestowing upon this much-harassed, young printer: "Conscious of my *deficiency* in the knowledge of the *divine Art* of MASONRY, I feel such a *diffi-*



dence in my own abilities, that nothing but *your* known Candour and wonted generosity of sentiment, which ever characterizes MASONS, joined with the solicitous and repeated request of this Lodge—whom it is my highest happiness to please—could ever induce me to undertake an office so far superior to my capacity.”... The Orator continued:

“*True Friendship*, which is *Love*, a most divine passion of the soul, is not to be found in such purity among any set of men as those of our Fraternity.” Then followed tributes to the “Pillars of our Craft, Light and Truth, Love, Honour and Justice.”

The Morning Star Lodge, the first to be instituted in Worcester was erected March 11, 1793 (or 5793) and was “constituted in ample form on June 11th following, on which occasion an elegant discourse was delivered by the Reverend Mr. Aaron Bancroft.”<sup>8</sup> This minister of the Second Parish in Worcester, father of George Bancroft, the historian, was one of the most loyal friends of Isaiah Thomas. The latter was the elder by six years. Bancroft had been a student at Harvard in the class that entered in 1774. After the interruption of the Revolutionary War, he returned to college and graduated in the class of 1778. He came to Worcester to preach as “a supply” for the Reverend Mr. Thaddeus Maccarty when the veteran minister of the First Parish (called to Worcester in 1747) was ill. So popular was Aaron Bancroft that he received a unanimous call to “lead a group of seventy-seven

persons" from the First Parish who formed a new church. By marriage with Lucretia Chandler he made social contacts of exceptional influence. Over this Second Parish, one of the pioneer churches of the Unitarian creed in Massachusetts, Mr. Bancroft, who was installed in 1785, remained for fifty-four years.

In the diaries of Isaiah Thomas are frequent references to the close companionship he had with Mr. Bancroft and his family. In turn, he gave loyal support, both in his newspaper and by large money contributions, in the later years of his prosperity. It is noteworthy, however, that Thomas "owned" pews in both the First and Second Parish. One of the first records of his admiration for this preacher-friend is found in the account, in the *Spy* (June, 1785) of Mr. Bancroft's installation. With effusive words he described the "listeners to the discourse." In conclusion he summarized: "The seriousness and attention of a crowding auditory on this occasion seemed to subscribe a *long and loud Amen* to the beauty and striking performance of the day and to imply the fullest approbation of those principles and measures that give rise to them." How he did exult in long, pedantic words—yet such was the fashion of the times!

Possibly it was, in part, due to the friendship of Aaron Bancroft that to Isaiah Thomas came the honor of being unanimously chosen as the First Grand Master of the Morning Star Lodge of Worcester. The meeting was held February 8, 1793 (5793) at the "house" of

Ephraim Mower. This was at the Sun Tavern. The members present included four of the Chandler family (Nathaniel, Charles, Samuel, Clark), John Stowers, Joseph Torrey, Benj. Andrews, Samuel Brazer, Ephraim Mower, John White, Joseph Allen, Jr. The Moderator (John Stowers) "in examining the votes declared The Right Worshipful Isaiah Thomas, Esq. Past Master of Trinity Lodge (Lancaster) unanimously chosen." On March 29, 1793, the Charter of the Lodge was read.

Soon after there was another notable occasion, the "Consecration of the Lodge and Installation of Officers." To Worcester, for this event, came many visitors of note—"Past Masters, Grand Officers and Deputies, with a number of the Bretheren from Lancaster and other parts of the country." Most familiar in name were "Right Worshipful Paul Revere, Past Grand Officer," and "Most Worshipful Jno. Cutler, Grand Master." To this celebration came, also, "Bro. Benj. Russell, Grand Secretary." This former apprentice of Isaiah Thomas, and his substitute in the Revolutionary army, had come to join in the honors to his former master and longtime friend.

After the installation exercises, said the record, "a procession was formed and walked to the North Meeting House to hear a Sermon on the occasion by the Rev'd Aaron Bancroft." Note the adjective, descriptive of this sermon in the record: "*Voted unanimously*, That the thanks of the Grand Lodge be presented to the

Rev'd Aaron Bancroft for the ingenious Discourse delivered by him this day, and to request of him a copy thereof for the press."

For a long succession of years the same Grand Master was chosen. At the end of seven years it was chronicled that the local lodge "had made a large number of Masons, among whom were many of the leading men in this and the adjoining towns." There had been four lodges erected in the county and these increased in number. In his diaries Isaiah Thomas noted his personal attendance at many of these organizations—at Oxford, Brookfield, Hardwick, Charlton. With the years came to him the honor of having lodges named "Thomas Lodge." Such was one in Monson, formed in 1796, with "12 Free Masons" which, after thirty-nine years, enrolled one hundred and fifty members. During the period of opposition to Masonry this lodge, with others, was obliged to lapse in its open meetings but the same Thomas Lodge is still existent in Palmer, four miles from Monson, with membership from both towns. By his will, this Grand Master left a legacy to the Monson lodge. The Isaiah Thomas lodge is in Worcester today.

There were impressive processions and meetings of the Masonic lodges after the death of George Washington, in December, 1799. In the records of the Morning Star Lodge is this tribute:

George Washington was a distinguished Patron of Masonry. He seemed especially near and dear to Morning Star Lodge

from the fact that some of its members were induced to join the Institution from his example and personal influence, and furthermore, the Constitutions of the Ancient and Honourable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons were printed at Worcester in 1792 by the First Master of Morning Star Lodge, Right Worshipful Isaiah Thomas and dedicated

To Our Illustrious Brother,  
GEORGE WASHINGTON,  
THE FRIEND OF MASONRY, OF HIS COUNTRY AND OF MAN.

This work is finely executed, 228 pages on strong paper, with the proud label, "Printed by Brother Isaiah Thomas, Worcester."

Nearly two hundred Masons joined this procession in memory of George Washington, at Oxford, including Masons from Worcester and surrounding towns. The expense, exclusive of "the journey," was one hundred dollars. For financial reasons, therefore, it seemed wise to refuse an invitation from the Grand Lodge of Boston to join in another solemn procession and service. In the refusal, on the part of the lodge in Worcester, the hope was expressed that "the apology will not be considered as arising from motives destitute of affection and benevolence, or the sordid principle of parsimony." That reply was signed "James Wilson, Master," but the phraseology is much like what is found in other writings by the "Worshipful Grand Master, Isaiah Thomas."

With the exception of a few years (1794-7, 1799, 1801, 1802) Thomas was the Worshipful Grand Master of Morning Star Lodge until 1803. When he

bought a residence in Boston and lived there, as cited in the previous chapter, he became closely affiliated with lodges there. He was made Most Worshipful Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts for the years, 1803, 1804, 1805 and 1809. He persuaded Paul Revere to design the certificate of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts. One finds treasured samples of these certificates in many historical museums, bearing the names of both Paul Revere and Isaiah Thomas.

From September, 1807, to September, 1809, Thomas was Most Excellent High Grand Priest of the Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Massachusetts. The Worcester Chapter, Royal Arch Masons, was not organized until October 21, 1824. Associated with Isaiah Thomas, whose name stands at the head of the list to whom the charter was granted, was the grandfather of the writer of this book, Jonathan Wentworth, as treasurer of this chapter of which Benjamin Chapin was High Priest.

Even in these days of his later life, with weakened endurance, Thomas never lost his fine presence when he was called upon to preside at meetings or "lead processions." A contemporary recalls his figure as "tall and elegantly formed and always dressed in the most expensive and fashionable garments. He was impressive in speech whether with individuals or at an assembly; he had a mind stored with knowledge of the best in literature and much information about science and history."

In the pages of his Diaries (written on the blank pages and margins of his Almanacks) are records of "excursions" which he made in Masonic service, sometimes going from Boston, often from Worcester. He notes "fraternal visits" to Lowell, Northfield, Exeter, Salem, Stockbridge. Among other events, on December 13, 1803, when he was elected Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, he made an address. This was ranked by his listeners—and recorded by him—as "appropriate and animated, short but comprehensive, monitory and affectionate."

The agitation against Masonry, due to political opposition and the unfortunate "Morgan affair" in the 1820's, caused resentment and some anger to Isaiah Thomas. It was necessary to curtail meetings in Worcester and elsewhere and to refrain from publicity about Masonry. The Morning Star Lodge, said its historian, "had the misfortune to be located in a political center, and to have its hall in the Town House, the most conspicuous place that could be selected and the most exposed to hostile force." The records of the lodge have no references to any trouble but there is a long gap in the records after June, 1828.<sup>4</sup>

In the will of Isaiah Thomas—or one of the wills—which was made during this period of political trouble he left legacies and expressions of his indignation at the temporary persecution of Masonry and his assurance of recovery therefrom: "an unjust and wicked excitement raised against Free Masons, evidently for political

purposes by self-created inquisitions formed of persons styling themselves Antimasons, aided by a few unworthy and unprincipled members of the fraternity." His diaries further mention his regret.

He had been on the building committee in Boston for the erection of a Masonic Hall; by his will, \$500 was designated "to be applied towards the erection of a commodious hall for the Lodge in Boston." There was "a trunk," containing records and emblems (some of which may have been intended for the Boston fraternity) but this trunk was not delivered for many years and then it came into possession of the Morning Star Lodge at Worcester. Not until 1878, nearly fifty years after the death of Isaiah Thomas, did this mysterious trunk find its resting-place. It was then presented to Morning Star Lodge "by an elderly gentleman" whose name was not ascertained. It bears these inscriptions: "Masonic Papers—to be delivered to the Grand Master or Secretary of the Grand Lodge to be deposited in the archives of the Grand Lodge.... To the particular care of Moses Thomas, Esq., in case of my decease—Ancient Records, &c."

"The trunk contained the following mementoes and relics which are precious to Masonry; a blue velvet altar cloth lined with blue silk, and a green bag embroidered, with a Bible, square and compasses, with the words, MORNING STAR LODGE, WORCESTER, MASS. on one side, and various Masonic emblems on the other. It contained, also, an ancient apron said by



the donor to have belonged to Isaiah Thomas, which has been suitably framed, and now hangs on the walls of the preparation room.”<sup>5</sup> Two of the portraits of Isaiah Thomas are on the walls of the Worcester Masonic Temple. The gavel which he used as Grand Master, and the chair in which he sat, “the first Master’s chair of dark cherry wood,” with Masonic emblems in gilt, are other possessions. The Bible, with his imprint, is used on special occasions. In these later days of the twentieth century there have been echoes of the high regard with which Masons, throughout the country, revere the memory of Isaiah Thomas. In the *Iowa Grand Lodge Bulletin*, for March, 1929,<sup>6</sup> was a discriminating appreciation of “Isaiah Thomas, Printer, Patriot, Freemason” by Brother J. Hugo Tatsch, P.M. The Iowa Masonic Library has certain relics, much revered, and an old letter, with his book-plate, sent to them by Thomas, his portrait, and a copy of his *History of Printing*. A printed copy of his *Diary, 1805-1828*, has been more recently received.

The reader is brought closer to this Grand Master, in his lifetime, by two letters, among the Thomas Papers, which identify his connection with the Thomas Royal Arch Lodge, named for him, which is now located in Fitchburg, Massachusetts. The first meeting of this Lodge was held in Princeton, Massachusetts, January 2, 1822. The letter to Mr. Thomas was dated “Jan’y 21, 1822,” and was signed by Samuel Clark, H.P.:

I have now the pleasure in behalf of the Council, consisting of Companions Whiting of Lancaster and Thomas of Sterling, who were appointed a Committee for the purpose, to inform you, that from a high regard for you as a man, from a strong affection for you as a Mason and Companion, and from gratitude to you as distinguished Patron of our Order, we have taken the liberty of using your name, and calling our Chapter Thomas Royal Arch Chapter. Should this, our united and cheerful act, meet with your approbation, we shall be much gratified, and think ourselves highly honoured in bearing your name.

The answer to this letter is in the best diction by Isaiah Thomas, free from verbiage and affectation; it represents the restraint and sincere sentiments of this man who, more than seventy years of age, maintained his keen mentality and unwaning optimism.

Worcester, Mass., Feb'y 11, A.L. 5822.

EXCELLENT COMPANION:

I have received your letter of the 21st ult. communicating to me official information that a chapter of Royal Arch Masons had been recently organized in Princeton and that the members of this Chapter have been pleased to use my name and call it Thomas Royal Arch Chapter.

This unexpected honour and mark of their regard will not fail to enlarge and strengthen those feelings of affection which I have long had for my bretheren in the several degrees in the Royal Arch; I regret that I have not been more worthy of the distinction with which I have been, at times past, and on the present occasion, honoured by my bretheren and Companions, but for purity of heart, I can affirm that advanced age has not diminished my esteem for the Masonic family, nor impaired the veneration in which I hold the principles on

which our Fraternity is founded. It will afford me pleasure shall I be able at any time to make use of the kind invitation of visiting your Chapter. May it become a bright Star in the Masonic constellation; enlighten "the rugged path of life," and enable those who seek to discover the Wisdom, Strength and Beauty of the Pillars, which support the Royal Arch.

The letter ends with a more intimate tone of thanks and regard, and a hope that all "may be enabled so to conduct in our Lodge below, as to be permitted to enter the *perfect* and sublime Lodge above, where ever dwells and reigns our only Supreme Grand Master."

To the end of his active life, Isaiah Thomas maintained his share in Masonic services and honors. Significant is an entry in his Diary, June 17, 1825 (when he was seventy-six years old). It chronicled the dedication of the Bunker Hill monument: "Attended Grand Lodge. General La Fayette visited the Lodge and sat between me and the Grand Master—had the pleasure of again taking him by the hand, and a short conversation—walked in procession with the Grand Lodge—Masons of various degrees in the procession—the whole of which was more than a mile in length—was kindly assisted by two past Grand Masters—assisted in laying the Corner Foundation Stone of the Monument to be erected on Bunker Hill."

## CHAPTER XIII

### BUILDING A TURNPIKE AND OTHER PROJECTS

“RELATIVITY of time and space”—as a phrase and as a thesis—is often suggested when we compare the modes of travel to-day with those of a hundred years ago. As tourists or commuters speed over the section of the Turnpike from Worcester to Boston, with an average time not much over an hour for forty-four miles, they may fail to recall that the same route, in general, was used by the old Turnpike which was completed about one hundred and ten years ago. What was then the *new* Turnpike did not allow any “speeding” comparable to today but it was a great improvement upon the old roads. Moreover, Isaiah Thomas was one of the most resourceful promoters of this turnpike.

The establishment of his business connections in Boston, as well as his many calls for other “meetings,” there and in neighboring towns, necessitated frequent journeys over bad roads and stressed his efforts to improve these conditions of “stage-coach and tavern days.” An extract from his diary, January 4, 1798, reads: “Very bad traveling. Broke the sleigh a few rods from Howe’s at the black house in Sudbury—could not get it repaired nor get another large sleigh—sent to Sudbury

causeway for the Stage to come and take us to Boston to-morrow. Tarried at Howe's from 11 o'clock this forenoon—Slept there this night which was exceedingly cold—next morning all set off (in an extra sleigh) at 10 o'clock and arrived in Boston before 2 o'clock. Paid 16 dollars for extra Carriage." Howe's at Sudbury was what is now The Wayside Inn.

Another note from Boston, is for December 18, 1809: "Went to Worcester in the Stage. Bad traveling—was fifteen hours on the journey and not a moment of time in unnecessary delay." In milder weather Mr. Thomas and his wife, with other members of his family or friends, traveled in his own chaise, or his "Chariot," with his Negro coachman.

Interspersed in his diaries, from 1805 to 1818, are accounts of "Meetings of Turnpike Directors" which he attended in Boston, or of his expenses and "balances" due, such as: "Charged Turnpike Corporation three days at 2s and 3d." Whether Isaiah Thomas was the original "promoter" of the Turnpike, between Worcester and Boston, or only one of a group of enterprising men who urged this road, cannot be asserted. That he was the leader of the project from the Worcester terminus and most influential in securing its accomplishment is indisputable.

There was already a Turnpike of a sort through the towns from Worcester to Springfield. Proof of this—and that it was considered likely there might be an extension of this road east or west—is in a letter and

"communication" from Dwight Foster in 1797. The letter to Mr. Thomas, reads: <sup>1</sup>

Brookfield, Sept. 14, 1797.

SIR,

I have to request the Favour that the enclosed Notification to the proprietors of the first Massachusetts Turnpike Corporation may be inserted in a conspicuous Part of the *Masst Spy* on Wednesday next and be continued three weeks.

I will pay the Bill for printing when I shall next see you.

Yrs. respectfully,

DWIGHT FOSTER.

P.S. Pray do not fail of inserting the notification in the next Paper.

The "Notification" duly appeared in the *Spy* on Wednesday, September 20, 1797, signed by Dwight Foster, President, and Moses Bliss and Phineas Upham, Directors. It gave notice of the annual meeting to be held at the house of Mr. Asa Bates, Palmer, on Wednesday, October 4th, to elect officers, to fix a place for a Turnpike Gate and Toll, and "to see whether the Corporation will apply to the Legislature for further extension of the Turnpike Road."

In those days, as in ours, legislatures and corporations took their time for action. It was nine years after this meeting to see whether there would be an effort made to extend the Turnpike, before the franchise was granted to the Worcester Turnpike Corporation, on March 7, 1806. There are several "mile-stones" set up by Isaiah Thomas, and recorded in his *Almanacks*, dur-

ing this interim. They indicate his own zeal and untiring courage which was a large factor in this project.

One of the first is dated April 15, 1804: "Hired two surveyors and went with them to survey the Land E & N for a Turnpike Road to Boston. Crossed the hills and Long Pond to Shrewsbury being in a direct line from Worcester Bridge (which crossed the brook) and returned home the same line back. A good road can be made." A year passed and then: "April 25th, 1805: Surveyors arrived from Roxbury. Went out to meet them; they crossed Long Pond at a little distance, say 30 rods, from where I crossed it last week; they came in a direct line from the School house in Roxbury to Worcester Court House—were 6 days on the route distance from Boston about  $37\frac{1}{2}$  miles."

Action had begun and little time was wasted now. April 28th; "Surveyors from Cambridge arrived on a direct line from West Boston Bridge to Worcester Court House." April 30th: "Went to Western (Warren) to meet the Court's Committee and others with the agents from Roxbury to survey the road and find better rout from Western to Worcester." On to Brookfield from Worcester journeyed the "Gen'l Courts Com<sup>ee</sup>" where they spent a day and night, in company with Isaiah Thomas; on May 3rd this Committee arrived at Worcester at one o'clock: "We had prepared for them a very handsome Dinner at Johnson's Tavern."<sup>2</sup> (This was later the Exchange Hotel; the proprietor in 1806 was Samuel Johnson.) The next day the Committee of the

General Courts "set off from the Court house (in Worcester on a course East, 1 degree north from Bladder pond, thence about due E. & N. to the Long Pond on a resurvey for a road to Roxbury. We parted with the Com<sup>o</sup> at the Long Pond."

Other "very handsome dinners" must have been given to the Committee during the summer and early autumn. On March 7, 1806, the franchise was granted "to build from Roxbury to Worcester on the ancient highway now Cambridge Road, forming eastern end of the Old Connecticut Path." The portion which had been laid out as a public highway from Boston, in 1662, to Roxbury, or Brookline Village, was to be used as a toll road. The surveyors had made a new trail from this point through the woods straight to Mitchell's Tavern in Newton Highlands, then across the Charles River to Newton Upper Falls; thence across a part of Needham (now in Wellesley) to "the Neck of the Ponds," a narrow part of Lake Cochituate in Natick. The route then passed through Framingham, Southboro, Northboro, Westboro and Shrewsbury to Long Pond "and to the street in Worcester near the Court house."

On the older part of this road were milestones, giving the distance from Boston Town House; some of these were set by Judge Sewall in 1734 and 1735; later milestones were placed by Paul Dudley, afterwards Chief Justice of Massachusetts Bay. They were marked with his initials, "P.D." The four-mile "P.D." stone is now embedded in the wall surrounding the



grounds of the House of the Good Shepherd; another milestone is in the wall of a schoolhouse at Roxbury.

To have a franchise granted was one desired goal; to organize the Corporation and secure enough stockholders to meet the cost of building the road was another task. The first meeting of the stockholders of this Worcester Turnpike was held in Boston, in Concert Hall, on the corner of Court and Hanover Streets, October 30, 1806. There were six hundred shares of capital stock at the par value of \$250 each. This made an investment of \$150,000 to build about forty miles of road; the estimated cost was about \$3750 a mile. As there were no returns filed with the Secretary of State it is difficult to assert by whom the stock was taken. Newton men took sixteen shares.

How much of his time and patience Isaiah Thomas contributed to this turnpike in its early stages may be realized by some of the notes in his Diary of this same fall and winter, 1806. "Nov. 12th, Set off from Framingham with 2 of the Directors of Worcester Turnpike. Surveyors and chainmen to review the proposed road, and arrived at Worcester 14th day at sun-down: the 18th; Directors of Worcester Turnpike & Gen. Court's Comm<sup>o</sup> met at Worcester; 19th: Directors and Court's Comm<sup>o</sup> went on the Route to view the road.; 20th. Finished viewing the road, and arrived at Boston this evening; 21st: Directors met at Boston. I set off this afternoon for Worcester in a chaise alone: 22nd; Arrived at Worcester." These were strenuous days for

one of the Directors, as Mr. Thomas was; on some occasions he was President pro-tem. There were large expenses connected with his travel and entertainment of the surveyors and General Court Committee. He must have welcomed the news, in January, 1807, that he "had drawn 500 dollars in Amoskeg Lott<sup>y</sup>."

There were two features of the Turnpike which were long associated with its success. One was "the entertainment" at various Taverns on the way—at The Punch Bowl Tavern, in Brookline, with elm trees and a huge sign of a bowl and ladle overhung by a lemon tree, laden with fruit some of which had fallen around the bowl; this had been a favorite resort of British officers before the Revolution: The Richards Tavern (built 1770) was near the Brookline-Newton Boundary; The Mitchell Tavern was in Newton Highlands; Wheeler's was in Framingham, and Forbush's Tavern in West-boro.

The second factor in the success of the Turnpike was less popular than that of the entertainment at taverns—namely, the toll-gates. There was one at the rear of the Richards Tavern and another at Newton Lower Falls. One of the trials was to collect this toll; for there were cheats and "chiselers" and their vice was called "shunpiking." By an Act of March 3, 1809, the location of certain toll-gates was changed, in an effort to prevent this evading of tax; it was "too easy at all times for persons to travel on the turnpike a greater part of the way and then, by turning off on old

roads, near the places assigned to receive tolls, to avoid paying their dues." One ingenious method of circumventing this trick was to place a toll-gate at the marsh and quicksands near Newton Lower Falls, two hundred feet east of the toll, so that travelers must keep to the road.

One of the most serious problems of the surveyors and engineers was found at Long Pond (now Lake Quinsigamond) between Shrewsbury and Worcester. The water was over five hundred feet wide at the desired place for crossing this Pond and from fifty to seventy feet deep. What kind of bridge should be built? A floating bridge seemed the best design; it was made of two or three tiers of round timber laid lengthwise and crosswise and overlaid with a course of hewn timber covered with plank and fastened to large abutments. This bridge cost \$9,000, but it lasted only a very short time.

A second bridge was built, floating like the first but with nine piers sunk in the lake on the line of the bridge about thirty feet apart, with the center one sixty feet square and the others sixty by thirty. Each intersection was pinned by wooden treenails. With increasing weight the structure would sink gradually and awaken fears as well as dizziness. Before it was finished, on the morning of September 19, 1817, while the workmen were at breakfast, the piers tipped and the uncompleted bridge fell, scattering the timbers. The cost had been \$13,000, covering fifty-four thousand feet

of lumber and the labor of fifty workmen who had been there all summer. Isaiah Thomas wrote: "My loss was not less than \$500; I was opposed to it from the beginning, believing it would not stand. A good floating bridge for this place, I think, will be the best we can have." His conviction was true and the floating bridge, built on the ice, in 1818, and towed to shore, stood the strain until 1826 and cost but \$6,000. This was a famous landmark.

In spite of such discouragements and expenses, the Worcester Turnpike Corporation was proud of its fame. When the Turnpike was completed, the occasion was celebrated by erecting two arches, one at the Boston beginning of the road, at Brookline, and the other at the Worcester terminus, at what was later called Belmont Street, near the foot of the long hill which wound up and down from Long Pond. To the meetings of this Corporation, and to expeditions of "viewing," with other directors and engineers, Isaiah Thomas paid loyal service. He had been dead for ten years before financial troubles overcame them and the Legislature, in 1841, dissolved the Worcester Turnpike Corporation.

Dr. Charles L. Nichols, to whom literature is indebted for the most meticulous and sympathetic research into the life of Isaiah Thomas, said in an address that to two men, Isaiah Thomas and Stephen Salisbury, was largely due the growth of Worcester into an important, industrial city, while Sutton, long its rival,

remained as a small rural community. The establishment of a printing-press and a post-office in 1775, followed by the development of Worcester as a center for post-riders to adjoining towns in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Rhode Island, were primal factors of initial change. Encouragement to agriculture and manufacturing, through the columns of the *Spy*, and its advertisements of shops for all kinds of merchandise in Worcester, were contributory factors. The building of the Worcester Turnpike, with its definite publicity for the place, was a mode of great service in placing this town "on the map" for travelers from north, west and south.

Coexistent with these favoring conditions was the financial and social strength of Worcester. On its roster of well-known families were lawyers and merchants whose names had widespread honor. The nephew of Isaiah Thomas, Ebenezer Smith Thomas (or E. Smith Thomas as he was called), the son of Joshua Thomas, in his *Reminiscences of the Last Sixty-Five Years*, already cited,<sup>3</sup> recalls the names of some of the prominent judges and lawyers in Worcester County at the meeting of the centuries: Levi Lincoln, Edward Bangs, Nathaniel Paine, Dwight Foster, Pliny Merrick, and Artemas Ward. The "elegant houses," at which entertainment was generously given to the *élite*, at home or from abroad, impressed this young man. He enumerates the families of the Paines, the Chandlers, the Salisburys, the Allens, the Stantons "and a number of others

forming an aggregate of as refined, polished and intellectual society as America could produce.”<sup>4</sup>

These men of brains and social rank differed in politics. Some of them had been strong Tories before the Revolution. Many of them were hearty supporters of Federalists, led by Washington and Hamilton; others favored more democratic standards. Isaiah Thomas was considered non-partisan; it was expedient that he should be so in his newspaper sentiments. At heart, however, he was Federalistic and conservative. His nephew recalls an occasion when John Adams said to this young man when they met: “Your father and your uncle were staunch Whigs in the Revolution. I wish I could say they were so now.” This remark, recalled, brought to memory a pamphlet which Isaiah Thomas had printed, warning against “the dangerous Vice-P——t” when John Adams was candidate for the office; in the *Spy* appeared some lines of satire, calling attention to the “cobbler ancestry of Adams.”<sup>5</sup>

Authentic testimony to the part played by Isaiah Thomas in projects for the prosperity of Worcester is borne by the veteran historian of that city, William Lincoln. Among other tributes is this: “In the location and execution of the Boston and Worcester Turnpike, an enterprise of much utility at the period, he assisted by personal exertions and pecuniary contributions, and few local works for the common good, were accomplished without the aid of his purse and efforts.”

As Dr. Nichols has emphasized, Worcester was in-

debted to Stephen Salisbury, as well as to Isaiah Thomas, for much of its growth and mercantile prosperity. In social prestige his family contributed large measure. As has been mentioned, he came to Worcester in 1767, at the age of twenty-one, to open a branch of the mercantile business of his brother, Samuel, in Boston. When Isaiah Thomas arrived, in 1775, Stephen Salisbury was already "a leading citizen." He built the first Salisbury mansion and here his mother presided until her death, in 1797. Afterwards he married Elizabeth Tuckerman, daughter of Edward Tuckerman of a prominent Boston family. To the civic pride and great generosity of his son, Stephen Salisbury, Worcester was largely indebted for land and buildings which have been of national importance. The Worcester Art Museum, internationally known and honored, is one of the memorials to the younger Stephen Salisbury and his munificent gifts and legacies. It is likely that Isaiah Thomas was not a frequenter of the Salisbury mansion at first, but with increased educational opportunities and contacts with men of rank in many fields, Isaiah Thomas gained, and maintained, the social recognition in Worcester and Boston which his native keenness and adaptability had fostered.

He had "a good sense of business," as his partner, Mr. Andrews, had acknowledged. He gave the land, in 1801, and superintended building of the Court House. When the first bank in Worcester was to be established, in 1803, he presided over the preliminary meeting of

the committee which included Benjamin Heywood, William Paine and Daniel Waldo, Jr. He was listed among the holders of shares, one thousand shares at \$100 each. This is an interesting commentary upon the times. The opening of the Blackstone Canal was another contributory element in the slow growth of the town; Isaiah Thomas often expressed the difficulties of developing "an inland city." Even in 1825 the population of Worcester was only 3,650. Thomas had died before the coming of the pioneer railroads, between 1835 and 1850, which made rapid increase in wealth and business, and raised the population, in 1850, to 17,849. He did not see the harvests of prosperity from the seeds of enterprise and economic vision which he had planted.

His activities, however, included those of the State of Massachusetts as well as of his home-town. In his *Almanack* for 1809 he enumerates some of the organizations to which he belonged, with the confession: "Last year I had more offices in Society than I could attend." Here is his list:

Grand Master of Freemasons in Massachusetts—resigned,  
27th of Dec.

One of the Directors of the Worcester Bank since its beginning.

Director of Turnpike

Magistrate of the Co (County) of Worcester

Member of the Charitable Fire Society at Boston

Member of Mechanics Association

Member of Mass. Humane Society



Member of the Mass. Agricultural Society  
Member of the Mass. Christian Monitor Society  
Member of the Mass. Forestry Association  
One of the Proprietors of the Boston Athenaeum  
Librarian & Director of the Social Library Co. of Worcester  
Member Evangelical Missionary Soc. of Mass.

The long list ends with the personal comment: "I cannot boast of being a useful member of many of the above-mentioned institutions." He failed to include at least one other society, the Faustus Association of Boston, which had the earlier name of Society of Printers and Booksellers of Boston; his name is mentioned in its records and commemorative oration as one of its "honoured members." The same year, 1809, when he regretted his many "organizations," he was invited to deliver an address before this Faustus Association of Boston but declined because he was so engrossed at that time, in writing his *History of Printing*.<sup>6</sup>

This enumeration of his memberships indicates the wide scope of his interests and the demands upon his time and energy. His reply to the invitation of the Massachusetts Agricultural Society, written carefully and with keen interest in the aims of the organization, is among the Thomas Papers. To many organizations and individuals he wrote long letters, sometimes making "first drafts" which have been preserved.

When a new bell was needed for the church in Worcester, Mr. Thomas was chosen by "Dr. Paine and

Mr. Chandler" to communicate with his friend, Paul Revere, and to ask for some possible rebate upon the "broken bell" and liberal terms in payment for a new one. Two letters from Paul Revere, dated May, 1798, have been preserved. The molder could not accede to the "liberal terms" asked for, because of trade conditions and a similar request from another church, but he assures his friend that he will try to fulfil the commission as soon as possible; "I have begun to mould it & the weather is little moderate I expect that it will be ready to deliver this day Fortnight." There is a later record of payment of \$74.50 to Paul Revere, "on account."

During these days, busy with a multitude of "meetings," Isaiah Thomas was actively engaged in his business of printing, binding and selling books in Boston, Worcester, Walpole, Brookfield and Albany. His son, Isaiah Thomas, Jr., was publishing the *Spy* and many books but his father was advisor here and in Walpole and Brookfield. There are scores of letters from Elisha Waldo about the Brookfield business (which seemed to fluctuate) and others from Alexander Thomas, a distant relative, who managed the Walpole press and shop, until its later years when it was carried on, under direction of Thomas, by "A. Whipple." In a postscript to one of his letters, on August 29, 1805, Alexander Thomas adds, "I have sold our lot of land in Duxbury at last for a share in the Turnpike which is as good according to what has been paid as 214 dollars."

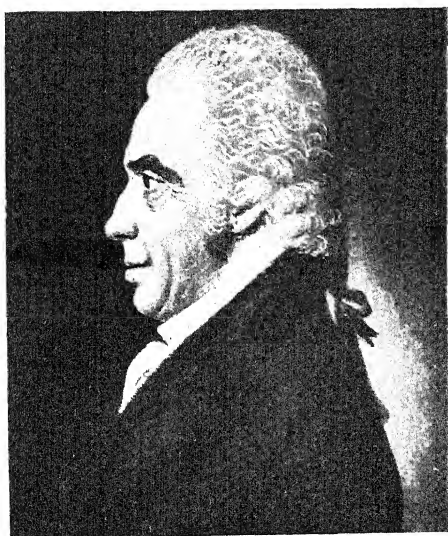
Apparently, during these years, Thomas was acquiring some of the land in different states which was found among his legacies.

There were times when he had to be a mediator between his son and Leonard Worcester when the latter was printing the *Spy*, and, also, issuing some books for "Isaiah Thomas & Son," at his printing-shop, "near South Meetinghouse." Worcester had been an apprentice for a time (possibly a silent partner) with Thomas & Andrews in Boston. He later became a minister of rigid doctrines. Hints of some of the differences which he must have had with Isaiah Thomas and *his* creed are suggested in a pamphlet which he published, in Worcester, in 1795, criticizing some of the doctrines of the Reverend Mr. Aaron Bancroft. In one of the letters from Isaiah Thomas to Leonard Worcester, regarding charges by the latter that Isaiah Thomas, Jr., had made "alteration" in one of the manuscripts submitted to the *Spy* by "Mr. Tucker," the senior Thomas writes in a tone of impatience and finality: "April 20, 1795, I have neither time nor inclination for farther controversy on this subject. I wish for no 'unmanly or unhonourable concessions'—I wish for that justice & honour from you which I am desirous ever to give to others on a like occasion & which I conceive will redound as much to your credit and final satisfaction as it possibly can do."

Hospitality of feeling and expressions were, however, the habitual traits of Isaiah Thomas. He was

generous to the limit to relatives. His "mansion" was a *home* for a large family and guests for long sojourns. A proof of his fervid hospitality is in a letter addressed to "Mr. William Young, Printer," in Philadelphia, with whom he had business relations. The letter was dated Worcester, June 10, 1791. After a brief discussion of business affairs, the writer regrets that his friend has been ill and urges: "I would by all means advise you to take a journey this way. I shall be happy to have you and Mrs. Young come and spend a month or two with me. I live in a remarkable healthy place—a change of air, I doubt not, will greatly contribute to the restoration of your health."

His Worcester mansion was frequently enlarged, as it was needed, to accommodate transient and more permanent guests. On one day he cites, "16 gentlemen dined with me" (January 16, 1808). Fireplaces and chimneys were added, as well as many rooms. In November, 1818, there is a large "item" for "Soap Stone fireplaces" from Boston. Drains were made for better sanitation, porches and dormer windows jugged out from back and sides of the original house. A row of "cottages" for extra servants, or for guests, were constructed on the hillside in the rear of his house. The original printing-shop was made into a house for his coachman. He was, meantime, developing land "on the meadow" which became Thomas Street, and planting there Lombardy poplar trees. There were offenders who failed to respect property rights in *those* days;



ISAIAH THOMAS, FROM A MINIATURE PASTEL MADE  
BY JAMES SHARPLES IN 1804



when they cut down the trees, Thomas offered \$20 reward, if they would confess or "give information."

Presiding over the large, varied family was Mr. Thomas, as host, and his gracious wife, Mary Fowle Thomas. He seems to have been manager of the household, as he would be of anything in which he was interested. There is an amusing entry in his diary for December 23, 1821: "Spoke to the people in the kitchen all going abroad at a time and leaving that part of the house exposed." His expense accounts mentioned, by name, some of the "helpers": "Live Henry who has lived with me 13 years and ran off" (he had "run up heavy debts"), in 1808; Parker, who was coachman from 1818 to 1827 and received \$160 per annum; Anne Dalrymple, chambermaid, at 5s. 3d. per week; and Mrs. Abigail Price, housekeeper, at \$2 a week.

It is disappointing not to find more information about the second Mrs. Thomas, who was evidently a woman of fine character and much poise. She was sympathetic and companionable. Together she and her husband made "journeys" between Worcester and Boston, to Walpole and Exeter, to Providence and Portsmouth. He "took Mrs. Thomas to see the new jail at Charlestown" and to the theater to see "The Revenge," "Don Juan" and "Turnpike Gate." In his will of 1813, with certain legacies and instructions, he writes: "To my beloved wife and companion, whose affection has been ever manifest, whose prompt aid and vigilance in the concerns of our family has never been wanting, and

who has always been attentive to encrease [sic] the means of domestic felicity and to ward off the arrows of adversity, and by her cheerfulness and well-timed economy, greatly contributed to the acquirement of the property."

Mrs. Thomas died in 1818, attended in her later months by "Mrs. Fraser," whose wages were gladly paid by Mr. Thomas because she cared for "my dear, departed friend" to her satisfaction. It is a poignant summary, found in the back pages of his *Almanack*, 1819: "The year, that is, from Nov<sup>r</sup>, 1818, to Nov<sup>r</sup>, 1819, has been attended with as many important events to me, as any one year of my life—during this period I have buried my best friend and wife, with whom I had lived 40 years—I have also buried my only son; and I have married another wife. I have with the proprietorship of the Massachusetts Spy, which I established in 1770, sold my printing materials. Had a visit from my only daughter whom I had not seen for 10 years—My late son's family removed to Worcester. Many other events of consequence but the above the most important." A record, dramatic and concise!

Information about the personality and life of his only son is almost as inadequate as that about Mrs. Mary Fowle Thomas. He was educated well, by instructors in Worcester and later at Leicester Academy. He did not go to Harvard College, as did the grandson who bore the name of Isaiah Thomas. To his son, the elder Thomas passed on the *Spy* in 1802. He also had a



bookstore "with the sign of Johnson's Head." In the list of publications which have the imprint of Isaiah Thomas, Jun. (given in Evan's American Bibliography), are examples of his progressive attitude towards literature. Here are noted *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, by Anne Radcliffe (1795); *Evelina or a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*, by Frances Birney; and *Wisdom in Miniature* (1796).

Isaiah Thomas, Jr., married Mary Weld, a sister of Mrs. Ebenezer Andrews. They had twelve children in a remarkable mathematical sequence: the first six were girls, the last six were boys. In 1810, he decided to leave his business and residence in Worcester and to move to Boston. Here he had a book-shop on Cornhill. He died "of an accident," in Boston, June 25, 1819. I have not been able to find details of this accident. By a coincidence, in the *Spy*, June 30, 1819, the mere notice of, "the death of MR. ISAIAH THOMAS, JUN., formerly Printer and Publisher of this paper, aged 45 years," is followed by this announcement under *Deaths*: "At Mobile, Mr. Isaiah Thomas Andrews, eldest son of Mr. E. T. Andrews of Boston." These two devoted friends and partners must have sympathized deeply in their individual losses. Isaiah Thomas, 3rd, who married Mary Ann Reeder of Virginia, was lost at sea, in February, 1862, with three children when he was en route on the S.S. *Milwaukee* to Algiers, as consul.

Mrs. Isaiah Thomas, Jr., with her large family, returned to Worcester, where they shared the protection

and wealth of the grandfather. Her father died suddenly, of apoplexy while in church at Boston. It must have been a proud day for Isaiah Thomas when he could record, "Sept. 29, 1821: Went to Cambridge with my grandson, Isaiah, and got him entered at the University. Visited Dr. Holmes and returned to Boston." Benjamin Franklin Thomas, the youngest grandson, went to Brown University; he was a lawyer and judge, honored in many circles. He wrote the memoir of Isaiah Thomas which forms the introduction, in the second edition, of the *History of Printing*. One of his granddaughters, Mrs. Pliny Merrick, was a close neighbor of her grandfather, in his later years. In 1826, her house caught on fire, in the midst of a snow-storm. Following mention of this event, in his diary of 1826, is the sequel, "Insured the house I live in, and several others."

There were many years when the daughter of Isaiah Thomas, Marianne, was a sad disappointment to him. She seems to have inherited some of the peevishness and unreliability of her mother, Mary Dill Thomas. From her uncle's home, where she lived as a girl, she married James Hutchins, a publisher of a newspaper, the *Federal Spy* in Springfield from 1792 to 1794. He came to Worcester where, for a time, he was associated with the press of Isaiah Thomas and his son. There is no record of his later life.

In a letter to her father, dated October 3, 1797, she announced her marriage to Samuel Mather of Whately. There are suggestions of criticism from certain sources,

including her family, but she ends, with philosophy: "If we conduct well, we shall have the respect of the world." She asks for some furniture, with a reference to what "mother thinks" on this subject. Query, did she mean her own mother, Mary Dill Thomas, or her aunt, Mrs. Joshua Thomas, with whom she had lived so long? Four years later she was seeking a divorce from Mather. She appeals for sympathy and aid from her father, telling him of her prospective child, and her fears for her own health. Valeria, the daughter, was born in Northampton, in 1801.

Four years went by and she married Dr. Levi Simmons of Vermont. They lived first at St. Albans and later at Burlington; two sons (one died in infancy) and two daughters were born but, after a few years there was another divorce for Marianne. She returned to her father's home in his old age, and her daughters and son were companionable to him. Although he never refused assistance and paid large sums to her husbands, he kept a careful account of these "monies," with regrets at the lack of practical wisdom on the part of his daughter.

Pathos is the note which prevails in the later records of the domestic life of Isaiah Thomas. After his forty years of happiness with his wife, Mary Fowle Thomas, he married, about eight months after her death, Rebecca Armstrong, cousin of the second Mrs. Thomas, and one who had often served their household as companion and housekeeper. His own words tell the

sad story in his *Almanack*:<sup>8</sup> "May 6, 1822; Rode out with Mrs. E. T. Andrews. Had a meeting with Mrs. Thomas and her friends in a friendly way. Separation thought best and mutually agreed to. Very bad headache, and I might add, heart-ache—these have attended me the last 2 years. Carriage came from Worcester for me, in order to accomodate Mrs. T."

There were compensating bright spots in the domestic gloom which so often seemed to surround Isaiah Thomas. In his family lived nieces and nephews whom he loved. Elizabeth Mary, called Eliza, daughter of a brother (Peter Thomas of South Hampstead, Long Island) came to live with her uncle when she was a young child; she was christened, at the age of six, by the Reverend Mr. Aaron Bancroft. She was a delightful companion on many journeys. One of the griefs of his later life was her death, from consumption, on July 12, 1813. She had married Stephen Thayer Soper of Boston and borne a son, Isaiah Thomas Soper. The brother of Eliza, John Thomas, was another member of her uncle's family. There is a letter extant, from Peter Thomas to this son, John, when he was about seventeen years old, admonishing him to "Mind your Learning; and By all Means to Behave Yourself and Be a good and trusty Lad." This youth died about a year after this letter was written, in 1794.

Quotations have already been cited from the reminiscences of another nephew, E. Smith Thomas, son of

Joshua, who came to live in his uncle's home at the age of thirteen and was an apprentice. He recalls long hours for the lads when the folio and royal editions of the Bible were being printed. "We rose between 5 or 6 o'clock and read proof until 12 or 1 at night." He recalls the "exclusive" club to which his uncle sometimes took him. One of his later memories is a visit to his uncle in 1816, when Isaiah Thomas was feeling the strain of the years and the brevity of life for one who, like him, had such varied ambitions. To his nephew he said, "We no sooner learn how to live but we have to die."<sup>9</sup>

As early as 1784 Isaiah Thomas had property in three states, as is shown in the legacies in his will of that year. He had lands in Vermont at Fairhaven and Easthaven. To his brother, Joshua, he bequeathed "all lands in eastern part of the Commonwealth called the District of Maine, in a new township, not far from Machias"; to his sister, Susannah Amelia, he left his farm in Lancaster, Massachusetts. In this will was a legacy to "Mary Thomas, late Mary Dill, the sum of One Hundred and Fifty Pounds, for the sole purpose of buying a Farm, for her support." This last phrase indicates her continued demands upon his patience and support. His sister, Susannah, remembered with legacies in his wills, lived in Philadelphia. When he made his trips there, to see other publishers and to arrange for sale of his published books, he visited her. She had been married four times, first to a master of a ship in

Edenton, North Carolina, then to Captain Hynan of Baltimore; her third and fourth husbands had been Philadelphians. Captain Freeman, the third husband, was in the army during the time of the yellow fever scourge, and Isaiah Thomas had asked his friend, Matthew Carey, the publisher, to find some trace of his sister, if possible, and report to him.<sup>10</sup> Her fourth husband, Captain Hugh MacCulloch, was a wealthy man of influence.

In his earlier wills Thomas gave expression to a project for a "Printers' Academy" in Boston. A similar school in Worcester, was to be for "young, industrious Husbandmen and Mechanics." By 1792, he had formulated this plan and made bequests for such projects; the sum which he bequeathed increased with the years, from £500 in the 1792 will, to \$20,000, by 1810. The terms of the legacy for Boston decreed that the sum should be placed at interest and the sum, not above £200 at first, "to be let to one person whom the town may appoint... to enable them to set up business for themselves in the Commonwealth." The annual interest was to accumulate until it should reach Four Thousand Pounds, when one-half of this amount should "be appropriated for the purpose of purchasing a piece of land in said Town and building thereon an handsome durable, brick or stone building" for the Printers' Academy. The children of "poor Printers, Booksellers and Bookbinders" were to learn English and Latin.

Worcester was to have a more specific allotment of land and buildings. One lot on the street which was to be called Thomas Street in his honor (which he had laid out) was to have built on it a "Charity House." For an annual dinner on Thanksgiving Days at this house he gave \$20 for a "good and liberal dinner . . . also on that day half a pint of common but good wine for each person, or a reasonable quantity of such other liquors as any of them may prefer, that they may have the means of participating on the days aforesaid like their more affluent neighbours in some of the essential good things of this life bestowed by a bountiful Providence, and be enabled to unite in grateful orisons for the peace and felicity of our country." This is a good example of feudal attitude and the effusive diction of his times. If the Charity House should not be approved by the town—and it was not—he provided that on the lot should be erected "a large and handsome schoolhouse or Academy." With enlargements, the school-house still bears the name of the donor as does the street in his honor.

Before he made his last will, there had been changes in his plans and his dreams. There was a marked shrinkage in his estate, which is noted in diary entries between 1814 and 1821. In April, 1820, he found himself "feeble" when he sold one-half of the stock of Thomas & Andrews to E. T. Andrews for \$18,000 cash, payable in two years without interest. "My half of the Company Stock at the discount usually made by

the Co. amounted to \$62,000," says another record of the time. He sold, also, real estate in New York, New Hampshire and Maine, "appraised at 15,000 dollars, nearly double its value." To both partners had come domestic sorrows, notably the deaths of their sons at the same time in different localities, as mentioned in the earlier chapter. The son of Mr. Andrews, who bore the name of his partner, had been, according to letters by his father, "a source of worry and anxiety to me and the family" for many years before his death. He had spent some time in Worcester in the home of Mr. Thomas. One queries whether the rigid family discipline of that time had not created some tragic reactions in both families.

There were financial troubles after the bookstores in Baltimore and Albany failed to succeed. Letters express in detail the arrangements with both Mr. Butler and Mr. Penniman and creditors. One letter from a debtor to Mr. Thomas in Walpole<sup>11</sup> charges him with being severe in his dealings; on the margin of this letter, Thomas wrote: "This ——— has defrauded me to the amount of 12,000 dollars." He was a generous but a just benefactor. Another letter from Daniel Goulding,<sup>12</sup> the same year, testifies to Thomas's "long established reputation for Philanthropy, Benevolence and Liberality." The Honorable Isaac Goodwin, his eulogist, emphasized his wide interests and his neighborly "charities and benevolence."



## CHAPTER XIV

### CONTRIBUTIONS AND LEGACIES TO AMERICAN LETTERS

TO keep an *aspiration* alive, in spite of daunting cross-currents of adversity, indifference and distractions, for more than fifty years, is almost a super-human feat. It was achieved by Isaiah Thomas. From his youth as an apprentice, setting type for a master who lacked health and ambition, through years of slowly-gained prosperity and honor, he never lost his faith in his ideals or in himself. To the Art of Printing he vowed his allegiance. He would prove to the world that *this was an art*, not a trade or a craft, that it was "the preserver of other arts."

There were many milestones on this road of ambition and handicapped progress. Some of these have been noted in earlier chapters. There were his pioneer editions of juveniles, his Nonpareil, Royal Quarto, Octavo and Folio Bibles; his "Musick Books," his progressive textbooks in English and in the sciences. There was the steady growth of prints and reprints until he had outstripped the records of other printers of his times. In a careful resurvey of the books, either printed by him, or by Thomas & Andrews (or by allied publishers, working for him) Dr. Charles L. Nichols has asserted that there were more than nine hundred books with such

imprints, in originals and later editions, compared with a total "of a little over eight hundred," imprinted by Benjamin Franklin, four hundred by Hugh Gaine and fewer by other well-known publishers.<sup>1</sup>

This aspiration from youth and manhood was to have threefold expression: (1) a *History of Printing* which he would prepare and publish; (2) a collection of newspapers, journals and books which he would gather; (3) the formation of some society which would guard and increase such *Americana* for the sake of later generations of students and researchers. The three forms were interrelated yet each was distinctive in plan.

In his Diary for April, 1808, is the note: "Began writing a Sketch of the Origin and Progress of Printing." During this month and the next few weeks, are scattered records of "Work at the Historical Society Library in Franklin Place, Boston"; and again: "Went to Circus and to Old South Library in steeple; found more books; purchased 48 vols. old newspapers." May, 1808, was a month of steady research: "May 3, 4, and 5: Was alone in the Historical Society Library in Franklin Place all the afternoon and in the Old South Library in the steeple." Summer and autumn found him diligently searching and buying old files of newspapers: "Sept. 16: Purchased about 46 vols. old Papers, Boston *Evening Post*, nearly complete of Mr. Eliot, apothecary; they belong to the Fleets—gave 50 dols. for them." Three days later he exults: "Bought 3 vols. old papers of Ed Draper, gave 4 dols. for them; attended

every day the past week in search of Old Boston printed Books and in purchasing old files of papers for them." Again: "Went to Cambridge with young Dr. Gamage and visited the College Library; went to the Secretary's office to examine old records for information respecting Day & Green, the first printers."

He examined every "find" carefully before he gave his decision about its imprint. This is shown in a letter which he wrote to Rev. William Bentley of Salem, who loaned him a copy of what may have been a first edition of the *Bay Psalm Book*. He wrote (April 19, 1806), "Have examined it with great attention—it is really a typographical curiosity. I would most readily give twenty dollars for the title-page which is wanting that I might see the imprint. I have but little doubt, if any, that it is *one* of the first editions of that work but I wish to see the name of *Day* the printer on the title-page." His reference here is to Stephen Daye, who came with Jossé Glover from England and, after the death of Glover on ship-board, bought and used the first press in the house of President Dunster of Harvard, who married "the widow Glover."

The year before Isaiah Thomas began his intensive work upon the *History of Printing* he had been one of the Incorporators of that epochal movement in Boston, to increase the purchase and use of the best books. He was one of the original "proprietors" of the Boston Athenæum, one of the one hundred and fifty men who took shares at \$300 each, and thus formed the Corpora-

tion on June 18, 1807. This was the man who had begun as an unlettered apprentice from an obscure family. It must have been a moment of pride to him to sign his name beside those of Harrison Gray Otis, Josiah Quincy, Richard Derby, J. W. Storer, John Quincy Adams, Russell Sturgis, Nathan Appleton, Benjamin Weld and others on Boston's "Social Register," had such a book then been in existence. He was taking *his* place with the leaders in educational and literary movements.

Two years and more he devoted to this major work of gathering materials, sifting and collating facts about early printers and their products in America. The book was published, in two octavo volumes, in 1810. From the first letters on the subject, and reiterated in his preface, is stress upon the plan—not to write an exhaustive *History of Printing* but "to collect and preserve materials for such a History." It was a monumental task, far more difficult then than now, to trace the beginnings of printing on this continent and to portray, even in outlines, the personalities of these pioneer printers. No one was better equipped for such a work than was Isaiah Thomas, who had *lived through* much of the period and *lived with*, in personal contacts or by correspondence, many of the printers whom he revived.

To his friend, the Reverend Mr. William Bentley, already mentioned, he wrote frankly of his difficulties.<sup>2</sup> "April 1st, 1807: find my task more and more difficult—having all the facts and materials for my work to

*pick up* where I may by *chance* find them, requires much time and patience. I have been wholly engaged 8 or 9 months. I do not expect to get much more information unless I could spend a few months in the Southward. Ill health will not permit. I have begun to transcribe. My material will make a *work of some sort*, of about 500 pages, 8vo."

At the close of his preface he wrote: "It was my design to have given a catalogue of the books printed in the English colonies previous to the revolution; finding, however, that it would enlarge this work to another volume, I have deferred the publication; but it may appear hereafter." On loose sheets of paper he left notes for nucleus of such a catalogue. This was issued, after delays, as a separate appendix. If a scholar is accustomed to the modern methods of research and their interesting results in print, there is a temptation to be critical to a severe degree upon the lack of documentation, the lack of coördination, the repetitions and omissions in this *History of Printing*. Facts about the life and work of a single printer may be scattered in three or more places within the two volumes, if he moved from one town or state to another. There are many inaccuracies which later research has corrected; there are estimates of certain printers sometimes biased by the author's reminiscences of a personal experience. Dates are contradictory.

Granted these and other flaws in this *History of Printing*, it is none the less a work of exceptional value, both to history and literature. The very defects, due in

some cases to the author's temperament and lapse of detailed memories, give more vigor to many pages and stimulate that discussion and correction which would have well pleased the valiant writer. It was in keeping with his spirit of adventure, from youth to old age, that he should dare to undertake such a work and give to it the zeal and enthusiasm which never waned. Had he taken more time for the verification of his facts and the structure of his story, the work would have been much benefited. His purpose—to retain for posterity, “a correct account of the manner in which we have grown up as an independent people . . . and delineate the progress of the useful and liberal arts among us”—was a guiding bacon even when the light flickered in its steadiness. The history of these newspapers and magazines, in north and south of America, was a potent, often a fundamental, source of information for historians.

In justice to this veteran patriot-printer and his consciousness of his literary defects, one should reread this paragraph from his preface:

I am sensible that a work of this kind might, in other hands, have been rendered more interesting. It has a long time been the wish of many, that some person distinguished for literature would bring it forward; but, as no one has appeared who was disposed to render this service to the republic of letters, the partiality of some of my friends led them to entertain the opinion, that my long acquaintance with Printing must have afforded me a knowledge of many interesting facts, and pointed out the way for further inquiry, and that, therefore, I should assume the undertaking. Thus I have been, perhaps too easily,

led to engage in a task which has proved more arduous than I had previously apprehended; and which has been attended with much expense.

From his memories, as he affirms, came to his aid impressions of the development of this art and many of its respectable professors. In turn, *they* had received information—reminiscences or records—from their predecessors. With generous acknowledgment he mentions other men who, like himself, had been printers or book-sellers, or who had made contacts with men and affairs in their respective localities, who gave “Most friendly attention to my inquiries.” Among such were Ebenezer Hazard and Judge J. B. Smith of Philadelphia; the Honorable David Ramsay of Charleston, South Carolina; the Reverend Mr. Aaron Bancroft and Mr. William Sheldon of Worcester; the Reverend Mr. Thaddeus M. Harris of Dorchester; the Reverend Dr. John Eliot of Boston, and the Rev. Mr. William Bentley of Salem. Special mention was made of other helpers, “among the older brethren of the type”—William Goddard and John Carter of Providence, and Thomas Bradford and the late James Humphries of Philadelphia.

Among the Pennsylvanians of the “profession” who were closely associated with Isaiah Thomas, both as competitor and personal friend, was Matthew Carey, publisher and book-seller. Although he is not *here* mentioned by name he was, doubtless, included in the “many others belonging to the profession, in various

parts of the union, who have laid me under obligations for the information they have given me." In his Diaries, Thomas speaks of "visits" from Mr. Carey and his wife. A few of the Carey letters are extant in the Thomas Papers. During the year when the research for the *History of Printing* was being carried on, Thomas writes, April 5, 1808: "Mr. Matthew Carey, Printer, of Philadelphia visited me—an old acquaintance." Again he writes a letter in which affection and mild humor are mingled, with regret that Mr. Carey, his wife and daughter, did not stop in Worcester for a visit on their way back from Boston to Philadelphia.

It was unfortunate that the first volume of the *History of Printing* began with a section of the continent with which the author was least familiar and about which he had meager information, namely Spanish, Dutch and French America. His intent was merely to suggest that there must have been printing establishments by the Spaniards, in their colonies, long before the English settlements were made. He added notes (now foot-notes in revised editions) with names of some of the printers and book-sellers, like M. de St. Mery of San Domingo, later of Philadelphia; also M. Mozard, a printer in Port-au-Prince in the late eighteenth century "who came to Boston with a portable printing apparatus, a small press and several small fonts of neat type, manufactured in Paris." This equipment was sold to John Mycall, formerly a printer in Newburyport. Mycall, who was often a guest in the



Thomas home, moved these "tools" later to Harvard, Massachusetts.

The personal flavor, with dozens of *I*'s on the pages, is sustained throughout the two volumes. The most complete chapters are those upon Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and South Carolina, where Thomas had made his contacts and had first-hand information. There were, however, so many omissions in the records of Pennsylvania that William McCulloch of Philadelphia wrote many letters to Thomas, with suggestions, corrections and addenda, much of it relating to printing before the Revolution. In 1874, the American Antiquarian Society reprinted the *History of Printing* as volumes 5 and 6 of its *Transactions*, with many notes and additions. In 1921 the Society printed McCulloch's letters and corrections in the April number of its *Proceedings*.<sup>3</sup>

This book has a minor as well as a major note. It is, primarily, a narrative of the beginnings of the "printer's art," expressed through newspapers, magazines and pamphlets, with lists of early books appended, and biographical data about the most prominent "professors in this art." To the first volume, scholars turn to-day for detailed and vivid accounts of early Boston printers—Stephen Daye and his associates at the first press in Cambridge. Samuel Green, the Drapers, the Fowles, the Fleets, the Russells, Edes, Fleming and Mills. The two volumes, moreover, furnish the best autobiography of Isaiah Thomas, as has been shown by the many quotations from this source. What his rank

was among his predecessors and contemporaries was forcefully told by John Russell, in the "Address before the Faustus Association of Boston, October 4, 1808." Placing Thomas beside Benjamin Franklin, as the two most noted American printers, he recounts the "enterprise and ingenuity and ardent mind" which distinguished Thomas, from his "entrance into business," and his influence as a patriot-printer. With stress upon his studies, his "love of learning," and his stimulus to his apprentices, he said: "His prosperity has served to encrease his usefulness; and numerous individuals, and even the community at large, have experienced his liberality and munificence. This is a faint, but sincere, tribute of praise to the man, who may be justly considered as the father and patron of our Art in Massachusetts."

The minor purpose of the work by Thomas, in tracing the History of Printing, was to prove how much influence the press of the colonies had in fostering the spirit of freedom which culminated in the American Revolution. To illustrate this influence he gave accounts of prosecutions of printers for publishing libels, with description of the newspapers in which the defiant columns were found. His own part in the *Halifax Gazette* and the *Massachusetts Spy* has been told in earlier chapters of this book; his own dramatic, and often hyperbolic, versions have been retained.

"With a view to gratify the admirers of typographical antiquities, I have in several instances, given, as

accurately as the nature of the case would admit, representation of the titles of the most ancient Newspapers." Thus he introduced his droll extracts which, he believes, "will make the volumes amusing to the man of letters, and not altogether uninteresting to the antiquary." Thus did Isaiah Thomas proclaim himself again in advance of his times, in his efforts to mingle the scholarly with the entertaining, to blend research and publicity.

The expense of gathering materials for this historical work, securing at great difficulty even partial files of newspapers and magazines, and books of history, and their transportation (before the days of railroads) must have been large. It was borne, almost entirely, by the author of the volumes. Added to this part of the equipment for his work, was the cost of paper and types, binding and distribution, at his own expense and under his supervision. Advertisements of the book, "now in preparation," were inserted in many newspapers. How widespread was the response, it is not possible to-day to reckon. Moreover, this was before the days of book reviews, to any extent, and it is a matter of conjecture as to the favor with which the work was received by general readers. The interest in "relics" of every kind in this new country had not been awakened to any degree. Old newspapers and, frequently, books were fuel for the fire-places or wrappings for attic heirlooms whose *value* to collectors would have been subjects for doubt or ridicule.

That Mr. Thomas distributed copies of his *History*

of *Printing* to several libraries and colleges is proved by letters of formal acknowledgment. Doubtless more letters of this type are among the "lost Thomas material." Probably he received scores of personal letters in response to "complimentary copies" to statesmen, writers and publishers but only a very few of such letters are preserved. There are three interesting letters from recipients of these volumes, apparently, given through a friend or colleague of the writer. One is from Joseph Hopkinson, author of "Hail Columbia," and the son of Francis Hopkinson, the writer of "The Battle of the Kegs" and other satires, the musician, and signer of the Declaration of Independence. The acknowledgment reads:

Philadelphia, Jan. 18th, 1811.

DEAR SIR,

I thank you truly for the kind present of *Thomas' History of Printing*. The book is curious and valuable and particularly interesting to every American.

But I receive it from you with the more pleasure as a token of regard from an old and valuable friend of my father. Any notice from his friends is always most grateful to me. It is some evidence they do not consider me as unworthy of such a Father.

With great respect,

Your most Obed Serv,

JOS. HOPKINSON.

A second letter was from Benjamin Rush, the noted Philadelphian, acknowledging a copy of the work to Mr. John Dunlap, dated "Phil. Jany. 28, 1811":

The history of an Art which has been very happily called "the preserver of all arts", and of the persons who transported it from Europe to this Country and bequeathed it to their descendants, cannot fail of being interesting to every man who has a proper regard for liberty, science and religion, all of which are such obligations to it.

Among other things that meet with my approbation in Mr. Thomas's work was the justice he has done to your press. I can subscribe to the truth of what he has said of it, for I well recollect during those years in which the defense of the claims of the United States to liberty and independence was conducted by the pen and the press only your zeal was ardent and undisturbed.

From this printer, thus extolled by Benjamin Rush, came a word of commendation of the *History of Printing*, dated February 17, 1811:

To the talents and assiduity of Mr. Thomas, a subject too generally deemed to be uninteresting, is indebted for an inviting and impartial aspect.

In giving to futurity this rise and progress of an invaluable art from the infancy to a more mature period of the American Society, and rescuing from the darkness of fable and conjecture the history of a succession of its benefactors, Mr. Thomas has exhibited an evidence of the virtue of the art which gives new universality to and perpetuates every other art and improvement.

After reading—and copying—such a letter, with its verbosity and involved construction, one is inclined to believe that Isaiah Thomas, too often prolix and discursive to suit the literary critics of to-day, was among the purists of his own generation. Probably the univer-

sal training in classical languages, and the tendency of that era to imitate the English writers of the Restoration prose, explain the diction so generally polysyllabic and formal.

Captain John Dunlap, as the writer of this letter, and the recipient of other letters from those to whom he sent copies of this work by Mr. Thomas, had a large, merited place in the annals of Philadelphia. With cordial appreciation of his services to American development, Thomas devotes to Dunlap and his family as printers, generous space in the *History of Printing*. John Dunlap was the nephew of William, who served his apprenticeship (after he came from Ireland) with William Bradford of Philadelphia. The elder Dunlap married a relative of Mrs. Benjamin Franklin and thus he gained appointment as postmaster and published, for a term of years, Franklin's *Father Abraham's Almanack*. When he decided to become a clergyman, his business was taken over by John Dunlap, who had been trained by his uncle. For five years John Dunlap was the printer of the Journals of Congress, after his appointment to this government post in 1778. He was also a bookseller on Market Street.

Like Isaiah Thomas, John Dunlap had retired from active business in the early 1800's and had a large fortune for those days. This side-light upon his personality is told, with friendly intimations that Thomas appreciated Dunlap's skill as printer and his successful record as a land-owner:<sup>4</sup>

He received from government, as payment for printing, several lots of land in Philadelphia. This land, when it came into his possession, was valued at only a few hundred pounds, Pennsylvania currency; but the great increase of buildings soon made it valuable, and in 1809 he sold one square, extending from Market to Chestnut street, and from Eleventh to Twelfth street, for more 'than one hundred thousand dollars.'

Dunlap executed his printing in a neat and correct manner. It is said that, whilst he conducted a newspaper, he never inserted a paragraph which wounded the feelings of an individual! After the war commenced, in 1775, he was appointed a captain of a company of horse in the city militia.

Mr. Thomas was a wealthy man, with much of his property in real estate, when he was collecting materials for his *History of Printing*. In addition to the pamphlets, newspapers and books gathered for this purpose, he was accumulating many more journals and bound volumes for other than personal acquisition—namely, to fulfil his second aspiration, as a collector of *Americana*. An estimate of his wealth, the year after his book was issued, is in a "Remark," found among his manuscript papers, January 30, 1811: "Suppose my Estate, after my Debts are paid, will amount, according to my last account of Stock in Trade and other property, taken in 1811, to 200,000 dollars; from which deduct for losses which may arise, expenses attending the settlement of said estate, &c., fifteen per cent, that is 30,000 dollars and this deduction will leave 170,000 dollars." This may not seem a large sum, in these twen-

tieth century days when we talk in billions, but it was a "very goodly estate" in 1811. There was not a little shrinkage before his death in 1831.

On the Registry of Deeds pages, the name of Isaiah Thomas, as "grantor" and "Purveyor of mortgages" and "Loans," appears often, from 1781 to 1835, when his estate was settled. Much land in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont and New York is listed. This supplemented the increasing income from his printing business and copyrighted volumes sold at his book-stores.

Modern psychology, with its now familiar phrases of "the unconscious ego," the "stream of consciousness" and similar expressions, was unknown in the first decades of the nineteenth century when Isaiah Thomas was writing his *History of Printing*, and collecting and cataloguing his library of thousands of books, but the mental processes which are indicated by these latter-day phrases were operative. There must have been at least two questions which haunted him during this process. One was *where* he could possibly find more material on this unwritten subject of early printing and its expressions; the other *what* he should do with the collections which he was making, so that they might be available for other students, so that they might stimulate others to save and to catalogue more printed matter of value, for a history of our country and its arts and letters.

One of the places in Boston where he spent much time, in his researches, was the Massachusetts His-



torical Society. To its membership, after the publication of his volumes, Mr. Thomas was elected as "one reward of his *History of Printing*," says Dr. Charles L. Nichols.<sup>5</sup> He dedicated the work to "*The President and other Officers and Members of the AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY in Pennsylvania, and the President, Counsellors, and other Members of the AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES in Massachusetts.*" He was indebted for assistance to the Historical Society of New York, as well as to similar societies in other states; in a way, he acknowledged such obligations by bequests in his wills. He could not, however, select such a historical society of *one* state, as the repository of his collections which represented the written and printed history, thus acquired, from *all parts* of North and South America, then available.

To find lodgment for his collections he enlarged his Worcester house in 1808 and added many more shelves to the large private library in 1811. This "mansion house," in which he lived for close to a half century, had been enlarged at different times according to his own ideas of comfort and elegance. There were two landings to the staircase which was around three walls of the main part of the house. There were carved pillars and balustrades and an immense chimney in the center of the house. At the right was a wainscotted "parlor," with window-seats and walls decorated with Cordova leather, painted in landscape scenes. The ceiling was blue with silver stars and a large ostrich egg in the

center. Another parlor was on the left of the hall, with dining-room beyond. Through the porch, beyond the parlor, one would pass into a long, narrow room, probably the library. It had arched shelves at its western side. (A detailed description of the *Isaiah Thomas House* was written by Prof. U. Waldo Cutler, longtime Executive Director of the Worcester Historical Society.)<sup>6</sup>

As the accumulation of magazines and books grew in quantity, and the problem of their future dominated the mind of Isaiah Thomas, he consulted with a few friends and asked them, "What shall I do with this library that will be of distinctive service to posterity?" In his Diary, December 27, 1811, he wrote: "Recommended taking a Catalogue of my library; it occupied most of my time for 3 months or more." He was probably assisted by his faithful wife and younger members of the household. With his intimates he talked about a solution of the problem that was framing itself for him. Two of the most understanding friends were Levi Lincoln, Esq., and the Rev. Mr. Aaron Bancroft, with the lawyer, Edward Bangs, called into consultation.

It is interesting to remember that the father of George Bancroft, one of the first American historians to use methodical care in his researches, was among the first advisers who encouraged Isaiah Thomas to carry out his project for a *new* historical society which should be national—even, in time, *international*—in its membership and resources. George Bancroft, the eighth of

the thirteen children born to Aaron Bancroft and his gifted wife, Lucretia Chandler, was a lad of twelve years, in 1812, when the suggestion of this new historical society was taking form. Thus early he, doubtless, heard talk about the plan and its treasury of material on American history as a source of study. He must have known, at first hand, the contents of this private library, large and varied for its time.

On October 13, 1812, a petition was presented to the Massachusetts Legislature, signed by Isaiah Thomas, William Paine, Aaron Bancroft, Levi Lincoln, Nathaniel Paine, Edward Bangs and others, asking for the incorporation of a new body, to be called "The American Society of Antiquaries." In November, 1812, this society was organized at its first meeting at the Exchange Coffee House in Boston. Isaiah Thomas was elected president and retained this office until his death, nineteen years later. The word *antiquaries* in the title, was modeled after similar societies in England and Ireland.

In the advertisement of the first meeting, published in the *Massachusetts Spy*, November 2, 1812, may be read further details regarding the Society:

WHEREAS, by an Act of the Legislature of this Commonwealth, passed October 24, 1812, Isaiah Thomas, Levi Lincoln, H. G. Otis, Timothy Bigelow, Nathaniel Paine, and Edward Bangs, Esq., J. T. Kirkland, D.D., Aaron Bancroft, D.D., William Paine, M.D., Johnathan H. Lyman, Elijah H. Mills, Elisha Hammond, Timothy Williams, William D. Peck, John Lowell, Edmund Wright, Eleazer James, Josiah Quincy,

William S. Shaw, Francis Blake, Esq., Levi Lincoln, Jun., Samuel M. Burnside, and Benjamin Russell, Rev. Thaddeus M. Harris, Redford Webster, Thomas Wallcut, Ebenezer T. Andrews, William Wells and Isaiah Thomas, Jun., and such others as may associate with them for the purpose herein mentioned, were formed into, and constituted a Society and Body politick and corporate by the name of THE AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY, for the purpose therein specified; and whereas, by the fifth Section of said Act, the undersigned is "authorized and empowered to notify and warn the first meeting of said Society," Therefore, in conformity, thereto, he hereby notifies and warns each and every of the persons above named to meet, at the Exchange Coffee House in Boston, on Thursday, the 19th day of November, instant, at 11 o'clock in the forenoon, then and there to take such measures as shall be necessary for organizing said Society, establishing such Rules and Regulations as shall be deemed expedient, "agree upon a method for calling future meetings" and to act upon any other matter or thing relating to the objects of said institution.

ISAIAH THOMAS.

Worcester, November 2, 1812.

The choice of Worcester for the site of such a society and its library was largely because of conditions at that time during the second war with England. Should Boston be bombarded, and the valuable books and other collections be destroyed, the loss would be irreparable. (It was reported that to Worcester, and the bank of which Isaiah Thomas was a director, more than one-half million dollars in money and securities had been brought from Boston for safety.) The meetings would be held alternately in Boston and Worcester.

At the third meeting, February 3, 1813, "Isaiah Thomas presented a large and valuable collection of books valued at \$4000, after making the usual reduction of 20% from the first appraised value; said books being enumerated in a written Catalogue presented herewith. Levi Lincoln, Jr., and Samuel Burnside were appointed a Committee to receive from the President a deed of conveyance of the books and he was requested to retain them in his possession until a suitable place should be provided for them."

On the 217 pages of this catalogue the books were divided into seventeen sections:<sup>7</sup>

(1) Ancient books, or those printed before 1700; (2) Modern books, or those printed after 1700; (3) Bibles, ancient and modern editions; (4) Dictionaries; (5) Books in the Indian language; (6) Masonic Works; (7) Physic and Surgery; (8) Printing (books on the Art and type specimens); (9) Sermons, Election, Ordination, Funeral and special occasions; (10) Tracts, Ancient and modern in volumes; (11) Trials; (12) Books printed by I. T. and his companies, (619); (13) Periodical Works, Magaz., Reviews, Philosophical and the like: Periodical Works; Almanacks, Registers and Newspapers; (14) Orations, Independence, Gen. Washington, &c. (15) Books of Church Music, printed by I. T. or T. & A.; (16) Pamphlets printed by I. T. not in 12. (17) Books printed by Isaiah Thomas, Jr.

The books printed by him and by others for him were bound in full calf in uniform style, with his book-plate within each. The design and execution of this book-plate, here reproduced, has been definitely ascribed to

Paul Revere. Among the "ancient books" was a *Treatise on Natural History*, 1493; a perfect copy of the Massachusetts Laws of 1660, of those of 1672 and 1692, Hubbard's *Indian Wars*, 1677, with Foster's Maps, and Morton's *New England Memorial*, 1668. Of the Bibles more than thirty had been gathered for the text of his own Folio Bible of 1791; among them were texts in Hebrew, Latin, Greek, Dutch, Welsh and Indian, with *Erasmus on the Psalms*, Venice, 1476.

The history of the American Antiquarian Society, from its inception to the present time, has been told in other places. Its more than two hundred members represent foreign countries and wide America. Among letters of acceptance to membership, from 1814 to 1821, are those from Thomas Jefferson, Daniel Webster, Francis Parkman, John Randolph of Roanoke and Andrew Jackson. With the passing of the years came new gifts and acquisitions. In 1821, there were four hundred and fifty more volumes than in the original estimate. The remarkable Mather Collection, numbering over twelve hundred volumes and papers, was added later. The question of safe storage for the treasures was vital from the first year. Some were kept in the Thomas mansion, others in the old printing-shop, many in a store-house, until 1820. In that year the president added to his beneficent gifts by providing the first home for the association. This first building of the American Antiquarian Society was on Summer Street, near Lincoln Square. It was a plain,

durable, brick building, with fire-proof equipment as well developed as was found at that time. The central part of this first building was dedicated August 24, 1820. The two wings were added in 1832, the year after the death of Mr. Thomas.

The second library of the American Antiquarian Society was on Court Hill, at the corner of Highland Street, where now stands a part of the Court House. This was built in 1853, on land donated by Stephen Salisbury who gave \$5,000 to the building fund. The third and present building, at the corner of Salisbury Street and Park Avenue, was dedicated in the centenary year of the society, 1912. At that time the assets, outside of collections, were estimated as \$491,441. At the dedicatory exercises, in 1912, many noted visitors from foreign countries and our own were present, including President William Howard Taft, Lord Bryce, Ambassador from Great Britain, and Federico Alfonso Pezet, Minister from Peru.

The estimated number of books, broadsides, manuscripts, magazines and other "working material," in the society library to-day, is "more than a million items." On the honor roll of its presidents are the names of Edward Everett, Governor John Davis, Edward Everett Hale, Senator George F. Hoar, Stephen Salisbury, Dr. Charles L. Nichols, Waldo Lincoln, Calvin Coolidge, Chief Justice Arthur P. Rugg. Probably, its founder could visualize, in part, its future as he wrote his successive wills.

Thomas's first direct bequest is in the will of 1813: "I give to the American Antiquarian Society, should I not do so before my decease, the whole of my private library valued at upwards of \$4000." This same year he made a bequest, in his will, of \$2000 for a handsome, permanent edifice of brick or stone for this society. Both of these legacies were given to the society before his death.

The breadth of his interests, educational and philanthropic, are registered in bequests in the wills from 1813 to 1825: \$300 to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, \$300 for the American Philosophical Society, \$300 for the Historical Society of New York and the same to the Historical Society of Massachusetts, \$100 each to the Philadelphia Typographical Society, and to the Franklin Typographical Society of Boston, \$200 to the Society for Promoting Agriculture, \$100 to the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanics Association of Boston, and \$100 to the Boston Apprentices' Library. There were also legacies to Harvard and to Dartmouth Colleges. In his last will, 1831, he explains a change: "I have given to Dartmouth College what I intended to bequeath as a legacy to that institution, also to Alleghany College." Both had given him honorary degrees—an M.A. from Dartmouth, and an LL.D from Alleghany.

More and more did Thomas concentrate his thoughts and hopes upon the American Antiquarian Society. In his later wills there is personal sentiment, in some of



the records: "Whereas, I have been particularly instrumental in the establishment of the American Antiquarian Society and I believe it may become highly beneficial to our country, if its members are attentive to the purposes of the institution; and as no Society for benevolent and patriotic purposes can be really useful without funds, and I am persuaded that there is no Institution with which I am acquainted more in need of support of this kind than the one mentioned, therefore, I give to the American Antiquarian Society *Thirty Thousand Dollars*," etc. To this memorial he was giving, apparently, the sums of \$20,000 and of \$10,000 which he had designed in earlier wills for the Printers' Academy of Boston and the School for Husbandmen, etc., in Worcester.

In addition to the legacies of tract of land, \$1000 towards erecting wings for the building, and \$12,000, put at interest, to pay the librarian and cabinet-keeper, he left other sums, from the residue of one-fourth of his estate: \$5000 to be placed at interest "to employ a proper person to explore the ancient fortifications, mounds in the western States or other parts of America and in taking plans, views, &c. and giving descriptions." Here, again, we realize how far-seeing was this man, and how wide and prophetic were his patriotic aspirations.

To the society he left certain treasured mementoes with personal associations: "prints of Mt. Etna in eruption in 1766, prints of Mr. Garrick in the character of

'King Lear' and prints of George Washington, portrait of Mr. Thomas by Mr. Greenwood of Boston," and what I esteem a most precious relic, a small lock of hair from the head of the Saviour of his country, General George Washington, at the time of his decease." Looking into the future, with patriotic enthusiasm, he interrupted his legacies to this American Antiquarian Society to proclaim: "It is Truly a National Institution. Age will increase its utility." This prophecy has been unquestionably fulfilled.

The years since his earliest dream of this "National Institution," and the service which he might give to its promotion, had brought losses to this patriot, deaths in his family circle, sorrows worse than death from domestic tragedies. Friends remained, dear to him, as his "gifts" of mourning rings testify—to the Reverend Mr. and Mrs. Aaron Bancroft, Edward Bangs, Timothy Bigelow, Mr. and Mrs. Ebenezer T. Andrews, Benjamin Russell and others. His grandchildren and nephews and nieces gave him companionship, as his Diary entries reveal: "August 23, 1826, with my nephew, Br. Moses Thomas, Breakfasted in Lowell where I lodged; thence to Pelham in New Hampshire, Windham and Londonderry, visited the place where I formerly owned and for some time lived, Dined in Londonderry, then passed on, etc., to Exeter and Newburyport and visited Mr. Mycall and several others. . . . Visited theatre with my four granddaughters."

In a day when many frowned upon the theater, *he*

supported it. One of his publications in 1792, in Boston, was *The Rights of the Drama—or an Inquiry into the Origin, Principle & Consequences of Theatrical Entertainments*. An earlier title, from the same press, had been *The Better Sort, or the Girl of Spirit; An Operatical, Comical Farce* (1789).

His Masonic friendships were many and cordial in that last decade of his life. To the lodge in Monson, Massachusetts, named in his honor, he left a remembrance in his will. On January 22, 1822, he records: "Visited by request, Morning Star Lodge, the annual meeting; well conducted." And again, on June 25, 1821: "Attended the festival of St. John with 4 lodges at Holden; presided by request of the bretheren."

June, 1826, he mentioned "several callers, among them Dr. Porter of Plainfield," and another visitor whom he thus describes with ironic note: "A woman who has travelled, as she says, from Alabama to Boston, in the stages, called to see me—has published a book, intituled *Sketches of the History, Life and Manners of the United States; by a Traveller*, of which she said she was the authoress. She carries with her her Books for sale. She was a loud talker, not delicate, and appeared to me and others somewhat deranged. Her name is Royall."<sup>8</sup>

A significant note of an earlier year, 1818 (January 23), reads: "Mr. Eben Adams, one of the Professors of Dartmouth College, called on me. He is on a mission to collect a sum to enable the government of the Col-

lege to defend their claim in the S[enate] (of the United States in Washington) against the government of Dartmouth University. Professor Adams took breakfast with me." Did he carry away also, with him, a subscription towards this "sum"? Did this have any influence upon the degree given to Isaiah Thomas by Dartmouth?

Three years later is another memorandum which is self-explanatory: "Dec. 15th, 1821: Application from a Tutor of Columbia College for Donation. have received several letters from the government of that college, on this subject."

Invitations came to him from many places to be a guest of honor; in replying, in 1827, to such a request that he should attend the Franklin Typographical Society of Philadelphia, he declined in affectionate words and said, "To adopt a typographical phrase my font is nearly worn out—but such remembrances are still dear to me."

There were lonely hours in his last years, especially after his eyesight failed. He made his friend and former partner, Ebenezer Andrews, his legal representative in certain business affairs but he kept his dominating management of his household. With typical exactness, he had arranged for his burial lot and the tomb which was built in the old Mechanic Street Burial Ground. In 1878, it was necessary to have the remains buried here, moved to other cemeteries. His tomb now stands near the entrance to Rural Cemetery on Grove

Street. When the transference was made, pieces of the first coffin were distributed to public museums.

At his funeral, in 1831, and again at the removal of his tomb to Rural Cemetery, addresses were made in fluent tribute to this man who had come to Worcester as an impoverished, harassed, youthful printer and who had lived to bring honor to his name and fame to his town. It would be easy to quote such lines of encomium from many sources. Among words of recognition and honor for him and for his cherished aspiration, it seems to me that none would have given *him* greater satisfaction than those which fill a page in Evan's *American Bibliography*.<sup>9</sup>

To

*The President, Vice Presidents, Councillors, Officers and  
Members and to the Memory of their Predecessors and of  
the FOUNDER*

*of the*

AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

*of Worcester, Massachusetts*

THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED

*in recognition of the Service rendered the Literary interests of  
this Country. An Association of Scholars in the Collection and  
preservation of the monuments of American Literature and  
History at the End of the First Century of a Corporate Exist-  
ence which has benefited American Letters, enriched the State  
and Gained for the Society a Foremost Place among the  
Learned Bodies of the United States.*



## NOTES

For full names of authors and titles of publications mentioned in the Notes, see Bibliography, page 313. The abbreviation *A. A. S.* is hereinafter used to mean *American Antiquarian Society*. References to *History of Printing, etc.*, by Isaiah Thomas, are to the second edition published in Albany in 1874.

### CHAPTER I

#### THE PRINTER'S APPRENTICE

1. Receipt signed by Isaac Allerton, New Haven, November 29, 1653.
2. Thomas, *History of Printing*, I:135.
3. *Ibid.*, I:xxvi.
4. Drake, *History and Antiquity of Boston, etc.*, 304, 690.
5. Thomas, *History of Printing*, I:157.
6. Court Records of Cambridge, Massachusetts, 69:262.
7. *Ibid.*, 79:378, 379.

### CHAPTER II

#### ECHOES OF THE *Halifax Gazette*

1. Thomas, *History of Printing*, I:157.
2. *Ibid.*, I:157, 158.
3. Copies of this number of the *Halifax Gazette* are to be found in the Massachusetts Historical Society, the A. A. S. and other libraries.
4. Thomas, *History of Printing*, I:158, 159.
5. *Ibid.*, I:160.
6. *Ibid.*, I:359.
7. *Ibid.*, I:359, 360

8. *Ibid.*, I:360.
9. Information about this episode may be found in Nova Scotia Historical Collections (1886-1887), Vol. 5.
10. Thomas, *History of Printing*, I:360.
11. *Ibid.*, II:96.
12. *Ibid.*, I:155.

## CHAPTER III

## BUSINESS AND ROMANCE IN THE SOUTH

1. Thomas, *History of Printing*, I:162.
2. *Ibid.*, I:xxxvii (Memoir by Benjamin Franklin Thomas).
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, I:xxxix.
5. *Ibid.*, I:344.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*, I:xli.
8. Thomas Papers, Vols. I, II.
9. Thomas, *History of Printing*, II:168.
10. *Ibid.*, I:339.

## CHAPTER IV

GENESIS OF THE *Massachusetts Spy*

1. Detailed accounts of these early newspapers may be found in *History of Printing*, II:12, 13; *Historical Magazine*, August, 1857; *Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings*, 1867.
2. Thomas, *History of Printing*, II:Appendix C, 249.
3. *Ibid.*, I:132.
4. *Ibid.*, II:26.
5. *Ibid.*, II:53.
6. *Ibid.*, II:59.
7. *Ibid.*, II:61.
8. *Massachusetts Spy*, October 18-20, 1770; letter by "Mucius Scaevola," October 31, 1771.



9. Thomas Papers, Vol. I.
10. Thomas, *History of Printing*, II:63.
11. *Massachusetts Spy*, March 7, 1770.
12. Thomas, *History of Printing*, II:63.
13. *Ibid.*, II:72.

## CHAPTER V

## THE HARVARD THESES AND THE "NEWSPAPER WAR"

1. Copies of these Harvard Theses, Class of 1771, may be found in the A. A. S., Massachusetts Historical Society and Harvard University libraries.
2. *Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, July 29, 1771.
3. *Boston News Letter*, August 1, 1771.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Massachusetts Spy*, August 8, 1771.
6. *Boston News Letter*, August 8, 1771.
7. *Massachusetts Spy*, April 25, 1771.
8. *Ibid.*, November 28, 1771.
9. *History of Printing*, I:166, 167.
10. *Ibid.*, I:166.
11. *Ibid.*, II:257, 258.
12. *Ibid.*, I:168.
13. *Ibid.*, I:175.
14. *Massachusetts Spy*, January 16, 1771.
15. *Ibid.*, February 27, 1771.
16. *King Henry the Fourth*, I:3.

## CHAPTER VI

## EVENTS THAT LED TO LEXINGTON AND WORCESTER

1. *History of Printing*, I:144.
2. *Ibid.*, II:63-64.

3. *Ibid.*, II:73.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, I:180.
6. *Ibid.*, I:1xiv.

## CHAPTER VII

## A GALLANT FIGHT AND A RETREAT

1. Buckingham, *Specimens of Newspaper Literature, etc.*, II:18.
2. *Ibid.*, II:8.
3. This issue of the *Massachusetts Spy* is numbered Vol. V: No. 264.
4. Cambridge University Press, 1924.
5. Thomas, *History of Printing*, I:137.

## CHAPTER VIII

## ECONOMIC AND DOMESTIC TRIALS

1. *The New England Chronicle*, Thursday, September 5, 1776, then published in Boston, not Salem.
2. Thomas, *History of Printing*, I:1xix.
3. *Ibid.*, II:181.
4. *Ibid.*, II:73.
5. *Ibid.*, II:74, note.
6. *Ibid.*, II:75. Much information about Salem newspapers of this time is to be found in Tapley, *A History of the First Fifty Years of Printing in Salem, Massachusetts, etc.*
7. Thomas Papers, Vol. I.
8. *Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings*, II:142.
9. *History of Printing*, II:77.
10. *Massachusetts Spy*, February 19, 1777.
11. *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII: No. 373.
12. Broadside, August 17, 1786 (A. A. S.).
13. *Massachusetts Spy*, March 18, 1779.
14. *Ibid.*, May 7, 1778.

15. *Ibid.*, October 20, 1783.
16. *Ibid.*, April 30, 1780.
17. Lincoln, *History of Worcester, etc.*, p. 113, note.
18. *Massachusetts Spy*, September 7, 1780.
19. *Cambridge History of American Literature*, I:120.

## CHAPTER IX

## PRINTING ALMANACKS, JUVENILES AND TEXTBOOKS

1. Thomas, *History of Printing*, II:78.
2. *Thomas's Almanacks*, January, November, 1781 (A. A. S.).
3. Nichols, *Bibliography of Worcester*, p. 5.
4. Nathaniel Patten was a bookseller and publishing agent in Hartford; there are many references to him in letters from Isaiah Thomas to Hudson & Goodwin (of Hartford) and a few letters to him, in the Thomas Letters in the New York Historical Society. In one of these letters, dated May 28, 1790, Thomas refers at length to a "dispute" between this firm and Patten, saying: "It appears to me that he is wrong—his last advertisement seems to be tinctured with phrensy. It clearly, I think, discovers the features of Revenge and I am sorry to see it." In this same letter, Thomas suggests that when Hudson & Goodwin "may be successful in procuring subscribers for the Bible, I expect to begin it, but with a heavy heart, in about 2 months."
5. By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers (New York, 1932, p. 104), and of the Cambridge University Press.

## CHAPTER X

## MUSICK BOOKS AND FOLIO BIBLES

1. *Massachusetts Spy*, February 17, 1785.
2. *A Liturgy, etc.*, translated from the Dutch, etc. Printed by James Parker, in Hanover Street, MDCCLXVII. For the

Use of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of the City of N. Y. This is said to be the first from types.

3. Thomas, *History of Printing*, I:142.
4. These facts are given, also, in the *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, 1918, Vol. XIX.
5. Thomas, *History of Printing*, II:78-79.

## CHAPTER XI

### WIDENING INTERESTS IN BOSTON AND ELSEWHERE

1. *New Travels in the United States, Performed in 1788 by J. B. Brissot de Warville* (Translated from the French. New York. Printed by T. and J. Swords for Berry & Rogers, Booksellers and Stationers, no. 35 Hanover Square, 1792), Letter III.
2. Boston, 1852, I:40.
3. July 16, 1793.
4. Mott, *A History of American Magazines*, 1741-1850.
5. Letter in the New York Historical Society.
6. Thomas, *History of Printing*, II:175.
7. *The Lay Preacher* (1817).
8. *The Philadelphia Souvenir* (J. E. Hall): A Collection of Fugitive Pieces from the Philadelphia Press, with Biographical and Explanatory Notes (Philadelphia, 1826).
9. Buckingham, *Specimens of Newspaper Literature, etc.*, II:195.
10. *Pickering Papers*, Vol. X.
11. 1848; pp. 51, 52.
12. See *American Literature* (North Carolina Press, 1933); also *Philenia; The Life and Works of Mrs. Sarah Wentworth Apthorp Morton* (1931).
13. *Herald of Freedom*, October, 1788.
14. *Diary of William Dunlap*, I:177.
15. *Ibid.*, I:174.

16. Thwing, *The Crooked and Narrow Streets of the Town of Boston*.

For more information about books printed by Thomas & Andrews, see also C. L. Nichols' paper on "A Firm of New England Printers," read before the Club of Odd Volumes (A. A. S.).

## CHAPTER XII

### HONORABLE SERVICE TO FREE MASONRY

1. Thomas Papers.
2. Brother Edward I. Mason, *A Centennial History of the Morning Star Lodge* (Worcester, 1894), pp. 7-8.
3. *Ibid.*, 8.
4. *Ibid.*, 47.
5. *Ibid.*, 217.
6. *Iowa Grand Lodge Bulletin*, Vol. XXX, No. 3.

## CHAPTER XIII

### BUILDING A TURNPIKE AND OTHER PROJECTS

1. Thomas Papers, Vol. III.
2. This was later the Exchange Hotel; the proprietor in 1806 was Samuel Johnson.
3. Thomas, *Reminiscences of the Last Sixty-Five Years*.
4. *Ibid.*, II:13-14.
5. *Ibid.*, I:50.
6. John Russell, "Address to Members of the Faustus Association of Boston at their Annual Celebration" (1808).
7. Letter, May 6, 1798.
8. *Almanack*, May 6, 1822.
9. Thomas, *Reminiscences of the Last Sixty-Five Years*, II:5.
10. Letter to Matthew Carey, etc., Thomas Papers, Vol. VI.
11. Thomas Papers, Vols. VI and VII.
12. *Ibid.*, Vol. VII.

## CHAPTER XIV

## CONTRIBUTIONS AND LEGACIES TO AMERICAN LETTERS

1. Nichols, "The Library of Isaiah Thomas," paper read before the Worcester Historical Society, January 11, 1924 (A. A. S.).
2. Thomas Papers, Vol. VI.
3. "William McCulloch's Additions to Thomas's History of Printing," *A. A. S. Proceedings*, Vol. 31 (1921).
4. *History of Printing*, I:259.
5. Nichols, "The Library of Isaiah Thomas."
6. U. Waldo Cutler, "The Isaiah Thomas House; Its Plans and Its Construction," *Old Time New England*, Vol. 18, No. 3.
7. Additions to A. A. S. in Letter to Gen. Hon. H. A. Dearborn, January 20, 1821.
8. Diary, June 13, 1826.
9. Vol. 7 (1912).

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